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THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Blessings of Victory, The Agonies of Conquest

The Six-Day War and After

Michael Walzer
Morton Kondracke
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Shlomo Avineri
The Editors

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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CORRESPONDENCE

ON SPECIAL OPERATIONS

To the editors:

Jefferson Morley, in "Ollie's Blueprint" (May 25), misrepresents the conference report *Special Operations in U.S. Strategy*. He implies that the clandestine arms sales, the diversion of funds, the illegal use of tax-deductible contributions, and other Iran-*contra* goings-on are "Special Operations," or subsumed by that term. But "Special Operations" is merely military jargon for any self-contained, *strictly military* action conducted inside enemy territory. Accordingly, at the conference I focused on the record of failure of U.S. commando actions (Son Tay, the Iran rescue attempt, etc.) and its organizational causes—in essence a critique of the notion that yet more money would remedy all problems. Readers of the document will detect Morley's falsification of its contents.

I did make a parenthetical comment pointing out that Guatemala had won its war without U.S. assistance, while in El Salvador the struggle was unresolved. The implication was that a flow of U.S. funds creates an inducement to keep the war going, as well as to imitate elaborate U.S. military practices. Morley implies that I endorsed Guatemalan atrocities. I actually said: "The Guatemalans are extremely modest in how they conduct their operations. . . . They are not attempting, as . . . in El Salvador, to get a third-rate army to function as if it were a first-rate army." My further reference to "appropriate" tactics clearly implies a parallel with the "appropriate technology" argument in Third World development (foot infantry, not helicopters galore; improved bullock carts, not costly trucks).

Further comments are outright falsehoods: (1) "Luttwak . . . worked closely with North." I never worked with Oliver North, and certainly was not paid by him or his agents or associates, or the NSC; (2) "[Luttwak was] named to a seven-member panel on a top secret mission to El Salvador in August 1984." I never went on any "top secret" mission to El Salvador then or at any other time, let alone with a "seven-member" panel.

EDWARD LUTTWAK
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Jefferson Morley replies:

The keynote speaker at the Special Operations conference, Secretary of the Army John Marsh, declared that "Special Operations" included not only military actions but also "economic, political, and psychological warfare." Numerous other speakers reiterated this same point. The conference proceedings disclose no hint of Mr. Luttwak's high regard for Guatemalan troop trucks; on pp. 157-58 he expresses his admiration for the Guatemalan army's efficiency in killing its foes. The seven-member committee of Pentagon consultants that Mr. Luttwak served on did not go to El Salvador as a group in August 1984, as I mistakenly stated. Mr. Luttwak went to El Salvador as a Pentagon consultant in August 1984. The committee, including three close associates of Oliver North as well as Mr. Luttwak, produced its report in May 1984. This report is still classified. Hence my description of the committee's mission as "top secret."

COUNTER 'REVOLUTION'

To the editors:

Capitol Records has licensed the Beatles' "Revolution" for use in a TV commercial for sneakers, and the fans are outraged ("Beatles Buy-Out" by Jon Wiener, May 11). I am glad that someone is finally angered by the cultural vandalism that pervades the advertising industry. The overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* is used to advertise cat food. The Brandenburg Concertos are used to peddle German cars. Mozart hawks cheap California wine. And Vivaldi advertises just about everything. Pegasus was formerly the winged horse who inspired the work of poets, artists, and musicians. Today he is a dray horse, hauling a wagon load of pet food, mustard, wine, and, most recently, tampons. So now there are some sneakers to add to the list. What else is new?

RONALD W. ANGEL
Oak Harbor, Washington

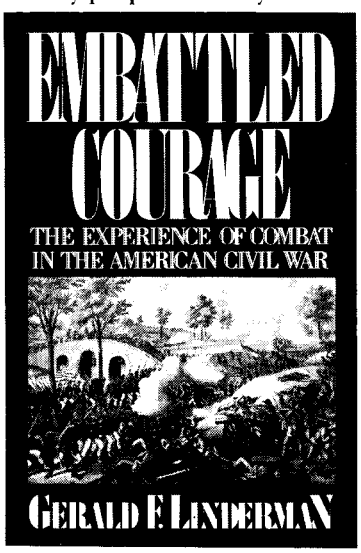
To the editors:

Jon Wiener laments that the Beatles' song "Revolution" "had a meaning that Nike is destroying." A piece of popular art like a Beatles song (regardless of any attachments we might have to it) is not the Holy Grail. The song itself was/is a commercial, pop culture property. In its initial form, it was released on record

continued on page 57

THE CIVIL WAR, AS THE SOLDIERS SAW IT

To the naive recruits of the American Civil War, no weapons seemed as protective as their deep-rooted belief in courage—a value that blindly propelled many into battle, and often to their deaths. Citing the direct testimonies of hundreds of Union and Confederate soldiers, here is a stunning and provocative look into their experience as they themselves recorded it.



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INTELLECTUALS AND RELIGION

Recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, among both professors and students, and amid inquisitive people generally, there is an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This interest is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious reawakening entail falling into the suffocating arms of a Rev. Moon or a Jerry Falwell, or embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or America First, which we see celebrated all around us these days. Nor does the religious renaissance imply a retreat from working for peace and justice. Rather, there is an awareness that, in the words of Jean Bethke Elshtain, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political commitments which are far more solid than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and the dangers of pseudo-scientific messianisms.

The New York Times Magazine article discussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this "return to religion," and rightly so. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual fascination with what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments which result in progressive social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lech Walesa, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Archbishop Romero. And we probe the literary riches offered by such greats as Ignazio Silone, Graham Greene, Thomas Merton, W.H. Auden, Flannery O'Connor, and T.S. Eliot.

An ecumenical and literary monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been characterized by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively" and by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky." And there's no denying the *Library Journal*'s verdict that we will "doubtless command increasing attention."

Those who write for us — Robert N. Bellah, J.M. Cameron, Eileen Egan, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Robert Coles, Christopher Lasch, Walker Percy, and others — express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and heart. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy pigeonholing. If you're keen on intellectual ferment and the life of the mind and spirit, subscribe today!

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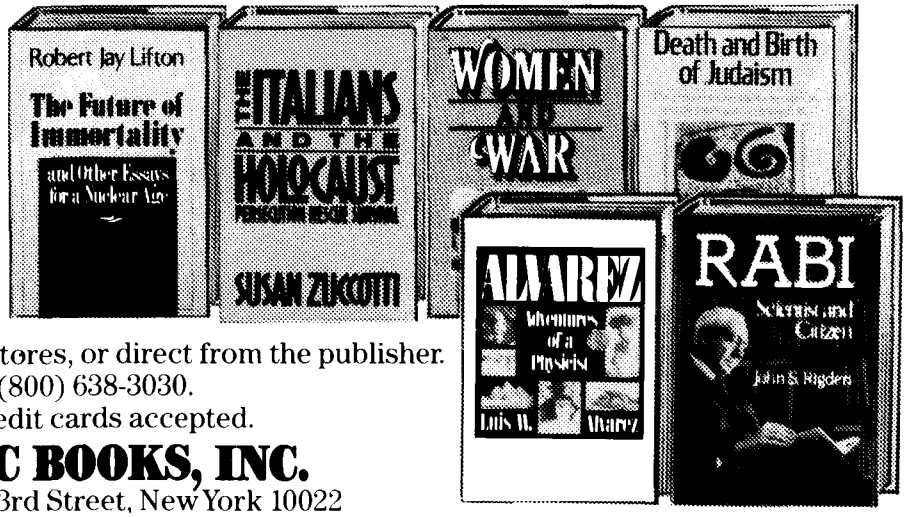

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JUNE 8, 1987

THE SIX-DAY WAR AND JEWISH POWER

On the 20th anniversary of the Six-Day War, the focus will be on the tangible consequences that are its legacy. Indeed, for 20 years the discussion has been about Jerusalem, the territories, peace and space and rights. But the war had a more subtle, sometimes overlooked, effect on the idea of the Jew. The war transformed it utterly, and perhaps irrevocably.

Three of the most important events in the last 1,900 years of Jewish history have occurred within the last 50 years. Each has had a profound effect on the world's consciousness of the Jew and on Jewish self-perception. The Holocaust became the ultimate symbol of Jewish victimhood and vulnerability. The establishment of the State of Israel transformed the Jewish people for the first time in almost two millennia from historical object into historical actor. And the Six-Day War meant the restoration of Jewish power to the stage of world history.

The shock has yet to wear off. Jews had, of course, won earlier victories. In the War of Independence, the Jewish settler was celebrated in Western literature and film as hardy, resourceful, courageous. But not, by any means, as powerful. In the Sinai campaign of 1956, Israel did win a swift victory over Egypt. However, this was seen not as a triumph of Israeli power but as the result of a stealthy gang-up by two major Western countries (Britain and France) with Israel as the junior partner. In some ways the Sinai campaign echoed the classic Diaspora idea of Jewish power, derivative and dependent on foreign patrons. Moreover, whatever gains Israel acquired as a result of Suez were very quickly reversed when both the United States and the Soviet Union forced Ben-Gurion to return the Sinai in exchange for guarantees that would later prove worthless.

The impact of the Six-Day War on the idea of Jewish power has been so dramatic that it is hard to remember now Israel's situation in May 1967. It was quite simply at the brink of extinction. Nasser expelled the U.N. "peacekeeping" troops in the Sinai, blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba, sent 85,000 troops into the Sinai (he marched them openly, and even had them detoured so as to pass under the window of the American Embassy), concluded military alliances with Jordan, Syria, and Iraq, and prepared for the final liquidation of the Jewish state. Israel was isolated and abandoned. After having forced the return of the Sinai in 1957, President Eisenhower had given Israel a memorandum guaranteeing free passage through the Straits of Tiran. During the desperate days of May 1967, the U.S. government was not sure how far its commitment to Israel extended, and was even reduced to calling Eisenhower (who had been out of office for seven years) to ask. Lyndon Johnson did try to organize an international flotilla to reopen the straits. Every country except Australia and the Netherlands said no, and the idea was dropped. By the beginning of June it was obvious that the Jews were alone. The only arbiter of their fate would be the Jewish army. Within six days that army had given an accounting of itself, and the image of the Jews was forever changed.

The geopolitical results were immediate and astonishing. Overnight Israel had been transformed from a weak and vulnerable ministate into the region's undisputed superpower, with dominion over all of its neighbors, and with a military reach that would take it within two decades to Uganda, Tunisia, and Iraq with seemingly little effort. Three things made this transformation difficult to accept: the extent of this new Jewish power, the astonishing speed with which it announced itself, and its contrast to almost 2,000 years of Jewish powerlessness culminating in the Holocaust.

This transformation elicited several reactions. First, that it was impossible. Initially both the Arabs and the Soviets contended that Israel had not done what it did. Nasser contended that the first Israeli air strike, which wiped out the Egyptian air force, had in fact been carried out by American planes. That fiction could not be main-

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tained long.

Hence the second reaction: if Jewish power was not impossible, it was intolerable. Thus the first great wave of postwar anti-Semitism came shortly after the Six-Day War. It was both exemplified and legitimized by de Gaulle, who was miffed that Israel had rejected his warning not to go to war. He ordered an arms embargo on Israel, ended two decades of very warm relations, and declared the Jews to be "an elite people, sure of itself and dominating." In the Eastern world, 1968 saw one of the more remarkable episodes in the long career of anti-Semitism. Poland was swept by a wave of anti-Jewish propaganda and persecution. There being so few Polish Jews left alive after the war, a new chapter in the history of anti-Semitism was being written: anti-Semitism without Jews. The anti-Semitic wave spread throughout the Soviet bloc and is still very much evident in the vicious propaganda featured in the Soviet press. And, with Soviet and Arab backing, anti-Semitism spread to places, such as Africa, that had never even known Jews. When the U.N. declared that Zionism is racism—i.e., that Jewish nationalism, alone among all the world's nationalisms, embodies the most radical of this century's evils—anti-Semitism had finally become universal.

In much of the West, however, it was still not permissible to be overtly anti-Jewish or anti-Israel. Resentment of Jewish power found more subtle expression than that of the U.N. or even of de Gaulle. Thus began an astonishing

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	OUT OF THE CLOSET	3	25
2.	THE EMPEROR'S NEW RACE	2	12
3.	HARM'S WAY	—	1
4.	PAY NOW, BUY LATER	*	4
5.	NOTHING PERSONAL	6	19
6.	WE THE PEEVED	*	3
7.	DECLINE AND FALL	—	1
8.	TAPE MEASURES	—	1
9.	NINE LIVES	—	1
10.	BABY BOOM BOOM	—	1

1. OUT OF THE CLOSET

Iranamok. Reagan seems to have been less "disengaged" than he's pretended, but his new position that he was a fully briefed fountainhead of *contra* aid backs him into a constitutional corner. It also opens new veins of controversy to exploit. Did the White House believe these hearings were catching fire? That their revelations were so embarrassing? Received wisdom was that they were an outside-the-Beltway bore, and were treading lightly around him.

2. THE EMPEROR'S NEW RACE

1988. Hart's collapse has made for a curious phenomenon: although the coverage machine has kept clacking away in high gear, sending out messages about "front-runners" and the like, it is all virtually meaningless. Except for Jackson, neither the remaining candidates nor the public is in a position to sustain such coverage. Suddenly, it really is too early again.

3. HARM'S WAY

The Stark. Initial reaction to the Iraqi attack on the *Stark* is a political Rorschach blot. Shultz immediately used it to defend the Iran-Iraq policy; House Democrats took to the well to ask what the policy is, and why U.S. ships are operating without cover. As for the Iraqis, they appear to have squandered what popular goodwill they had, which was based on they're not being Iranians. The shock jocks are already raising funds to buy Iraqi pilots glasses.

4. PAY NOW, BUY LATER

The economy. Americans aren't buying many big-ticket items, and the reasons advanced are not very heartening. These include gigantic consumer debt, falling real income, rising interest rates, and falling confidence in the economy. Meanwhile, if you've got a Crash scenario up your sleeve, chances are excellent that you can get it into print.

5. NOTHING PERSONAL

AIDS. The U.S. is floundering over what to do about AIDS. Arguments for compulsory testing and sexual contact-tracing have now run into cherished notions of privacy, so that even the most basic efforts to thwart the spread of AIDS remain controversial. This is not a reasoned approach to an epidemic; it is fear of the disease vs. fear of AIDS discrimination. It is a matter of time before the bigger fear wins out.

6. WE THE PEEVED

The Constitution. Some bicentennial party this is. The two hottest themes about the Constitution are (1) it's a dull read, and (2) its slavery clauses made it flawed from the start. To top off this inspiring interchange, Philadelphia is reportedly botching the summer celebration. As for the ocean of books about the document, only Michael Kammen's has sold well.

7. DECLINE AND FALL

Britainization. Is the American Century over? Another 400-page obituary (*Mortal Splendor*) has appeared, this one as the country reels with political, economic, religious, military, ethical, and racial problems. The book's getting good write-ups, but more interesting than academic tomes was the recent *Washington Post* survey in the Midwest. American yeomen are also speculating about national decline, and are openly concerned that the country is turning a corner, "like England."

8. TAPE MEASURES

Violent movies. There is page-one concern about the ease with which kids can rent bloody horror movies on tape, and there are cries to Do Something. This sounds like a replay of the EC Comics debate of the '50s (or video game addiction, for that matter). The movie trades are reporting, simultaneously, that gory genre tapes are in a steep decline, supporting the National-Crusades-Are-Always-Too-Late theory.

9. NINE LIVES

VALS. An interpretation of the entire population, known as VALS (for Values and Lifestyles), is drawing increasing attention. Developed in 1983 and used heavily by ad agencies, the system breaks the populace into two "need-driven" types, three "outer-directed" types (the middle-class), three "inner-directed" types (yuppies, DINKs, etc.), and a tiny "integrated" group. Accurate or not, VALS contrasts with the introvert-extrovert dichotomy of the '50s, and reflects the growing sense of a fractured society.

10. BABY BOOM BOOM

Magazines. The decision, at last, by boomers to have babies of their own has spawned a remarkable number of parenting magazines. What's curious here is not that there are so many advertisers available (though there are many), but the realization by publishers that boomers cannot simply use their own parents as role models the way other generations have. Boomers are turning to the magazines for how-to guidance.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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"You furnish the pictures, and I'll furnish the war."

So read the cable from a jingoistic and powerful American publisher to an artist in Cuba. The publisher was then engaged in fanning the fires that eventually erupted into the Spanish-American War.

Today, America is awash in warmongering of another sort. Many of America's leaders in the public and private sectors are marching militantly toward a trade war nobody can win—and which would be waged largely against the very nations that are America's friends, and its military allies.

Here are some of the volleys the trade-warriors are firing:

● The House, by four votes, recently approved the Gephardt amendment to its omnibus trade bill. The amendment has been labeled a punitive measure aimed mostly at Japan by editorialists of some of America's leading newspapers, and by leading economists.

Should the Gephardt formula become law, any nation running an "excessive and unwarranted" trade surplus with the U.S. would be expected to voluntarily act to reduce the surplus. If volunteerism doesn't work, then the U.S., by any means it sees fit —including tariffs, quotas, or any other devices—would cut the surplus by 10 percent a year.

Such unilateral action would no doubt violate the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which the U.S. has signed and long supported. It would also sharply limit the options of the President, who under current law has the authority to negotiate trade disputes—and impose the sort of tariffs recently invoked against Japan. Both in law and in principle, the U.S. can and should refuse to accept unfair trade practices by other countries.

U.S. trade officials are currently engaged in a new round of negotiations to amend and broaden GATT. What kind of clout can America bring to the table if its trading partners know they're facing unilateral penalties, and GATT be damned?

● The House-passed trade bill itself—like its counterpart now before the Senate—is full of protectionist pitfalls even without the Gephardt amendment. The bills provide, for example, that if any government program by any nation with which America trades has the effect of benefiting a specific industry within that nation, then the U.S. may impose countervailing duties. On the surface the proposal seems reasonable. But our trading partners could point to agricultural subsidies to U.S. farmers as precisely such an unfair advantage; they could say the same of cheap TVA electricity, or price-controlled natural gas, or any of the other countless "breaks" woven into the American societal fabric.

In addition to inviting acrimony and retaliation, the provision arbitrarily makes it "unfair" for a developing country to use its own natural resources to expand its industrial base and promote its economic development. That's akin to saying a country with many rivers would be unfair to use them for cheap transportation.

Do the proponents of a trade war really believe that their protectionist stance will somehow go unnoticed by our trading partners, and that other countries will fail to retaliate? Particularly since the U.S. is the world's leading exporting nation?

Important as trade is, there's much more at stake. America's major trading partners—among them Japan, Canada, the European Common Market countries, the Pacific Rim nations, Australia—are linked to this country politically and militarily, as well as economically. They are an integral part of the delicate balance that has kept the world from blowing up since the end of World War II. A trade war among allies can only create instability of the sort that could lead to dangerous military adventurism.

Protectionist brinksmanship, in short, is a very dangerous game, with special dangers for elected officials. America's most notorious and destructive trade legislation, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, was enacted in 1930. In 1932, Senator Reed Smoot lost his campaign for reelection, and Rep. Willis C. Hawley was beaten in his bid for renomination. The American people, fortunately, often mete out their own form of justice.

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political phenomenon of the West, the sudden and quite fantastic explosion of interest in Palestinian nationalism. This concern had been dormant for at least 20 years. For 20 years the Arabs had the power to grant what was now suddenly an inalienable right—the right of Palestinians to self-determination—and refused to do so. For 20 years the Palestinians could have had a state, since their Arab brothers controlled the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian statehood did not seem so urgent an issue then. But now that the establishment of a Palestinian state would come at the expense of Israel, and would in effect reverse the gains of 1967, it became an issue of great moral valence for the West, particularly for Western liberalism. Given the timing of this enthusiasm, it is fair to assume that the new interest in the Palestinian cause was less an expression of sympathy for one of dozens of refugee groups displaced in postwar, postcolonial partitions than a means to deal with the intolerable: the rise of Jewish power.

An even more subtle counterpart of this discovery of the Palestinians was the sudden rediscovery of and nostalgia for Jewish values that tended to negate or even to devalue power: the "prophetic" tradition, Jewish justice, Jewish genius, Jewish universalism. These are, no doubt, important values, but what seemed to attract critics of Israel to them was their close association with Jewish vulnerability. As one interviewer said to Ariel Sharon shortly after the Lebanon war, "You are no more the country of the great dream, the country for which we cried." After the Six-Day War, to be cried for was no longer an aspiration of the Jewish people.

FOR JEWS, the Six-Day War had an extraordinary effect on their self-perception. In the West, particularly in those countries outside of North America where Jews have never been accepted as full citizens, the war gave rise to a palpable Jewish pride. The victory was shared. But nowhere was the effect of the war more profound than in the Soviet Union. The rise of Jewish nationalism, of the movement for emigration, and of the demand for Jewish rights are directly traceable to the outpouring of Jewish identification and pride that followed the Six-Day War.

For some Jews, the war's effect was at times intoxicating. A prominent Orthodox Jewish rabbi and philosopher, now residing in Israel, remarked shortly after the war that there was no longer any need to observe the fast day of Tisha B'av (the day on the religious calendar on which Jews recite the Book of Lamentations and recall the destruction of the Temple and the other calamities of Jewish history) because, after all, the Jews had returned to Jerusalem. That kind of a religious complacency found its secular expression in the sense of arrogant invulnerability with which Israel faced Egypt and the Arabs throughout the early '70s. The stunning initial reverses of the Yom Kippur war followed. But neither the disasters of that war nor of the Lebanon war could undo what 1967 had done: restore to Jews a sense of control of their destiny, which in turn derived from a sense of, and the real achievement of, power.

That power is by no means absolute, or even fully independent. Absolute and fully independent power is reserved by history for superpowers. Israel, like any regional power such as Pakistan or Cuba or Vietnam, is dependent economically, militarily, and diplomatically on its superpower patron. There is no doubt that Israel is not a power in the sense of even a European power. But that would be a lot to ask of a country of four million people, with a territory the size of Maryland, with no water and fewer natural resources.

Modernity had taught the Jews the importance of power. And the lesson has been learned. Jews have mastered the gun. For some Jews there is a certain shame in this. For many non-Jews there is anger that a people who had traditionally been masters of science and learning and, most (in)famously, finance should now debase their genius with the pursuit of power. The shame and anger are misplaced. Hitler taught and May 1967 retaught that, in the absence of power, all these other Jewish values can be turned to dust. The restoration of Jewish power is thus a restoration of Jewish normality.

Jewish normality, the great Zionist dream, means not just Jewish garbagemen and Jewish prostitutes in the streets of Tel Aviv. It means that a fractious Israeli democracy may often degenerate into extreme partisanship and incivility. It means that religious fanaticism may, as elsewhere in the Middle East, make inroads in national politics, that chauvinism and even racism may prosper too. It means that power may be incorrectly or unjustly used. But it means, above all, that these sins should no more be held to delegitimize Zionism than they would be held to delegitimize the nationalism of any other people.

OF COURSE, power also brings responsibilities, and among the responsibilities of power acquired by Israel in 1967 was the Palestinian problem. As a result of a successful war of self-defense, the Israelis found themselves in control of the lives of well over a million Palestinians, many of whom were awakened, in great measure, by the Six-Day War, to a new nationalism of their own. The craven and cynical exploitation of Palestinian wretchedness by many of their "friends" worldwide does not diminish the need for Israel to find a solution to this problem, which is its problem as well. For reasons of security—and for reasons of justice—Israel must use its new power wisely. Unfortunately, it does not always do so.

In the complex negotiations that have been made possible by Israel's gains in the Six-Day War and that will ultimately lead to peace in the Middle East, the questions have always been questions of land and rights and boundaries. But ultimately there is the question of power. Wherever the boundary lines are drawn, any settlement whose aim is to return Israel to its vulnerability of May 1967 is unacceptable. The world is far too dangerous and hostile to expect Jews to give up power in return for promises. The lesson of '67 is that the great abnormality in Jewish life is Jewish powerlessness and that its return should never be permitted again. □

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STARK CHOICES

It may well be that the 37 American dead on the 3,500-ton frigate *Stark* are victims of an Iraqi mistake. Let's for the moment receive Baghdad's apology as sincere, though an apology is not a justification—or an explanation. Still, some conclusions are inescapable.

The French-built Mirage that fired a French-made Exocet missile at a vessel that twice identified itself as a U.S. warship was not aiming at an Iranian target—despite the desperate suggestion by the Iraqis that they were. In fact, the *Stark* is only the latest of the nearly 250 non-Iranian (and non-Iraqi) ships to have been bombed or otherwise assaulted in the Gulf during the last three years. We hear a lot, and justifiably, about the Iranian threat to the oil trade. But Iraq has been just as guilty as Iran in this indiscriminate war against all who use the seas. This should come as no surprise. Iraq started the war against Iran six years ago as a simple imperial adventure, and it has broken the treaty-mandated taboo against poison gas in its conduct of that war. (Had the Israelis not taken out the Osirak atomic reactor in 1981, who knows whether the Iraqis would not by now have rained nuclear devastation on their enemies and death by fallout over all West Asia?)

Regime to regime, these two barbarous combatants probably deserve each other, though their peoples certainly deserve better. Alas, the Iraqi Ba'ath, which murdered its way to power in 1958, and Khomeini's revolution, swept in by the mob 20 years later, though widely different, were both widely welcomed in the West as vastly more progressive than their predecessors. In a way, it's only fair, then, that we also pay some price for those abysmal judgments.

Still, the United States clearly shouldn't tolerate what happened to the *Stark*, and it won't. But after we accept Baghdad's formal apologies and the families of the dead are assured of their compensation, will we allow these two outlaw states to continue to do to the navigation of other and weaker countries what we won't permit them to do again to ours? Remember that the error, if that's what it was, was only in the choice of an American ship.

NOTEBOOK

□ IRANAMOK IN PERSPECTIVE:

McFarlane: Congress was misled

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 13

McFarlane: Congress not misled

—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, same day

(thanks to William W. Shakely, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania)

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

WATER TORTURE

THE PROBLEM, as seen from the White House, wasn't with President Reagan's admission that he had once discussed aid to the Nicaraguan *contras* with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. The president's admission was reasonably straightforward. Reagan, sitting with President Vinicio Cerezo of Guatemala for an Oval Office photo opportunity on May 13, followed his usual practice of telling reporters he wouldn't take questions, and then did just that. His diary showed, Reagan said, that the king mentioned upon leaving a meeting in 1985 that Saudi Arabia had been giving $1 million a month to the *contras* and planned to double that contribution. "I think I expressed pleasure that he was doing that," the president recalled. But no way had he solicited a contribution from King Fahd "or anything of the kind."

Fine, but there was a problem with the TV coverage of Reagan's admission. Marlin Fitzwater, the White House spokesman, was unhappy with correspondent Chris Wallace's report on NBC. Tom Griscom, the communications director, and Ken Duberstein, the deputy chief of staff, were even more upset by the spot on the "CBS Evening News" by Bill Plante, a reporter who has covered Reagan since the 1980 campaign. Plante said Reagan had all but admitted to soliciting the Saudis for aid to the *contras*. And he suggested that this hurt the president's credibility even if the Boland amendment, the law that from 1984 to 1986 barred the Reagan administration from directly or indirectly spending government money on the *contras*, hadn't been violated. "What was being created was a perception of wrongdoing on the part of the president," said a senior White House official. "That one newscast drove that point home. You can't allow that to be unanswered."

The result was a tactical change in the White House method of coping with the congressional hearings on Iran-amok, at which the Reagan-Fahd meeting was originally disclosed. The overall strategy, known around the White House as "selective engagement," remained. Honored largely in the breach, the strategy calls for White House officials, including Reagan, to respond sparingly to revelations from the hearings. The idea behind the official reticence is to avoid advancing the story—don't give the press fresh quotes to play up or new explanations to quibble with. What changed was how the White House dealt specifically with the Boland amendment and its application to Reagan and the National Security Council staff. The old tactic in talking about the amendment in public had been to finesse its legal reach and stress how confusing the situation had been with five different versions of the amendment in place at one time or another. That tactic wasn't working, as the Plante broadcast made clear.

For days White House counsel A. B. Culvahouse and his deputy, William Lytton, had been arguing privately in favor of a declaration that the amendment didn't cover the

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president or the NSC. Fitzwater, for one, resisted. "I didn't want to take on a legal debate when we didn't need to," he says. "People said to me, 'What's your defense [of the president's actions]?' We didn't need a defense." Fitzwater feared that the Reagan White House would look like the embattled, desperate Nixon White House during Watergate if it made sweeping proclamations of presidential authority. Avoiding the Nixon analogy had been a top priority from the time the scandal broke. Yet with the notion growing that Reagan had violated the Boland amendment, Fitzwater had no choice but to acquiesce and put out the Culvahouse interpretation.

HE WASN'T ALONE. On May 14 for the first time Fitzwater insisted in his daily briefing that the amendment did not bar solicitation of aid to the *contras* from other countries. The next day Reagan said the same thing when questioned by Southern reporters at a news conference. (There were nine questions at this event, seven on Iranamok, one on colorization of black-and-white films, one in which a radio reporter got Reagan to read a promo for her station.) "I have not myself directly ever engaged in soliciting funds from other countries, but I know that this wasn't even prohibited by the Boland amendment," the president said. Two days later, Howard Baker, the White House chief of staff, said on "Meet the Press" that the amendment is "tightly specific" on the government agencies it covers, "and it did not include the president" or the NSC. Baker shied away from proclaiming that Congress can't limit the president's ability to conduct foreign policy. "I don't think you have to reach that point," he said.

The hearings produced other, smaller tensions at the White House. For one thing, it was difficult not to respond to each new revelation, especially since the White House doesn't want to be accused of stonewalling. Reagan repeatedly ignored the strategy of saying little. On May 7, the third day of the hearings, Reagan answered a shouted question in the Rose Garden about testimony that he knew of the diversion of proceeds from the Iranian arms sale to the *contras*. On May 8 he told reporters who appeared for a Cabinet Room photo opportunity that he'd been watching Gen. Richard Secord's testimony on television "a little." On May 11, at another photo session, he said he wouldn't answer questions, then had kind words to say about Attorney General Edwin Meese and Vice President George Bush in answer to questions. More than anyone at the White House, Reagan managed to advance the Iranamok story.

His inclination to answer impromptu questions drives his aides crazy. "It is difficult in the extreme to pursue a strategy of saying practically nothing when you've got a president who wants to respond," says a senior official. To aides who want to muzzle him, Reagan says, "I've got certain things I want to say. Why can't I say them?" To this argument, one aide shot back, "You're advancing the story. You're lending credibility to it." Reagan appeared persuaded, but soon enough he was answering shouted questions again. On May 12 aides thought they had an ingenious scheme for muzzling Reagan at a photo opportunity with Senate Republican leaders. They provided him with a short statement that criticized Congress for attaching arms control restrictions to a Pentagon spending bill. The plan was for Fitzwater to shut off the special lights once Reagan was finished with his statement, which is the normal signal for TV cameras to stop filming and for reporters and photographers to leave. The trouble was, Reagan was already answering a question from Sam Donaldson of ABC before Fitzwater could get the lights shut off. Naturally, Reagan was saying that he wouldn't answer the question of whether he'd solicited funds for the *contras* from other countries. "If I were going to answer that question, I'd say no."

Some officials were miffed at Fitzwater over this incident. "As press secretary, I don't turn the lights off on the president," he says. Besides, his attitude is that "basically you let the press satisfy themselves. If you call lights too soon, they'll be mad. The response the president gives is up to the president. You can't [stop him from talking] by controlling the press." The more general rap on Fitzwater is that he's too cooperative with reporters, an accusation that was never made about his predecessor, Larry Speakes. "Reporters take advantage of Marlin because he's a nicer person than Larry," says a senior official. "They exploit him. They get him to advance the story when they can't get the president to." The hell with soothing the press, the official said. "You've got to get your skin thick." What's needed on the White House staff is "internal discipline. . . . To make our strategy work, everybody's got to be working off the same instructions."

EXPLAIN THAT to Reagan. At his news conference with Southern reporters, Reagan said he was "having some trouble remembering" whether he had discussed a ransom to get American hostages out of Lebanon. This was not the best phrase, given the controversy over Reagan's failure to recall when he'd approved the first arms shipment to Iran in 1985. When Griscom heard the remark, he thought, "Here we go again." According to Fitzwater, all Reagan had to say to get out unscathed was "I never heard of ransom money." It would have been true, Fitzwater says, and it would have defused the issue, not inflamed it. Reagan couldn't manage this.

Given his druthers, the president would grab a big microphone and talk to the nation in conversational style—no prepared text—about Iranamok. He's obsessed with the notion that the American people don't believe him on the subject. "He is really riveted on this point that people think he has something to hide," says an aide. Reagan wants to blurt out everything he knows about the arms sales and money for the *contras*, and plead lack of knowledge about anything else. In fact, Reagan took this tack with long answers to questions during an April 28 interview with six White House reporters. His answers were rambling and sometimes incoherent. But the worst part, the aide says, is that Reagan's soliloquies weren't persuasive at all.

FRED BARNES

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MAKING OMELETS WITHOUT BREAKING EGGS

It's impossible. But many things once thought impossible have become routine through technological advance. For example, a great amount of progress is being made in new technologies to burn coal cleanly.

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POSTCARD PARAGUAY

SMUGGLER'S PARADISE

Ciudad President Stroessner

The largest late-night electronic goods shopping center in the Western world is in the jungle just north of the spot where Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil meet. In the maze of shops, kiosks, tables, and pushcarts, tourists from Brazil and Argentina browse for perfume, liquor, watches, phones, and stereo systems, most of it authentic brand name stuff and all smuggled in over the border. The proprietors are imports, too—from Taiwan, Hong Kong, or South Korea. Their stores have names like "Casa Chang" or "Casa Hong Kong."

The Paraguayan government has big plans for this place—it envisions a kind of gigantic Chinese Crazy Eddie's in the jungle. When Hong Kong becomes part of Communist China in 1997, jittery capitalists will need somewhere to go. Paraguay, already billing itself as "The Hong Kong of the Americas" (no small distinction for a landlocked country), is thinking of luring 30,000 of them to Ciudad President Stroessner. The Chinese would not only bring money (press reports say $200 million over the next ten years). They would also expand business for government officials who sell passports. Already much of downtown Stroessner is under construction. In March plans were approved for a $100 million airport to accommodate the expected increase in traffic. The whole idea is built on the one thing Paraguay does with efficiency and dedication: smuggling.

If you set out to design an economy with the single goal of maximizing corruption, you would come up with something very close to Paraguay. The black market dwarfs the legal economy. "The generals quit being bribed by smugglers long ago," says Martin Burt, who runs a foundation for small merchants in the capital, Asunción. "Now they own the businesses." One general whose official salary is $500 a month lives in a replica of Versailles.

The systematic corruption of anyone with the remotest connection to power is one reason that Alfredo Stroessner has stayed in office for 33 years. Stroessner himself has called corruption the price of peace. Before his coup in 1954, the Colorado and Liberal parties traded the presidency in bloody coups, and while in office opened the national treasury to their friends and exiled or jailed their enemies. Such chaos kept Paraguay in the dark ages. But with political stability and the foreign investment it attracted, the country began to modernize. From 1974 to 1980 it was the fastest-growing country in South America.

But corruption is just part of Stroessner's system to keep Paraguay politically quiescent—a system of social regimentation that must inspire envy among dictators from Managua to Santiago. The true nature of Stroessnerism is not necessarily reflected in the statistics on repression. Political deaths are rare. But Paraguay has its share of political prisoners, and opposition politicians, especially peasant leaders, are followed, jailed, exiled, threatened, and tortured.

Far more essential is the quasi-totalitarian structure of his Colorado Party. Each neighborhood in Paraguay has a Colorado subsection, which doles out coffins, medicine, jobs, loans, and scholarships. To get these benefits, one must be a Colorado, and it also helps to vote for the most "militant" party slates and spy on one's neighbors. The subsections are financed out of a "voluntary" five percent deduction from each government worker's pay. You have to be a Colorado to hold a government job or be a soldier, judge, or schoolteacher.

The Colorados win 85 percent to 90 percent in national elections held every five years. The rest of the vote goes to two phony opposition parties known as *zoqueteros*, a name for beggars who receive crumbs from a rich man's table. They have no access to television, and they compete in elections where all election-day workers are Colorados and voting booths are open. They sit in a Congress controlled by the Colorado Party, which last disagreed with Stroessner in 1959, after which he dissolved the Congress and jailed most of its members. "People don't know their most basic rights," says Carlos Filizzola, a dissident doctor. "The country has no civic culture."

Every night at 8:30 all radio stations are required to carry the half-hour broadcast of Voice of Coloradismo, which begins with a ten-minute Mussolini-style attack on the opposition. Paraguay's two television channels and three daily papers belong to Stroessner's friends and relatives. There was an opposition paper, *ABC Color*, until three years ago, when the government closed it down. Perhaps because of the international outcry, Stroessner did not formally shut down Radio Nanduti, whose morning call-in program drew almost half of all radio listeners. Instead, one night last April about 100 men in government cars attacked the station, smashing windows and equipment to the musical accompaniment of the "General Stroessner Polka," blaring from a loudspeaker they'd brought in for the occasion. Five days later the transmitters were attacked. Then the government jammed Nanduti's frequency—with Christmas carols. Commercials were jammed, too, and the station lost half of its advertisers. This January Nanduti shut down temporarily to stop the financial losses. The government said it couldn't reopen.

The four non-*zoquetero* opposition parties are crippled by jailings and exile, have no way to communicate with Paraguayans, and most of their attempts to organize or assemble end in arrests. And despite a National Accord to which all four subscribe, they have a tendency to feud. Since they believe that participating in elections would lend legitimacy to the regime, abstention is their only available act of protest. It's not easy to get people excited about sitting at home.

THERE ARE some signs of hope. The Catholic Church, which had maintained a conspicuous silence for 25 years, has begun to speak out. The Colorado Party is split by factional disputes for the first time. The first independent labor union was born in 1985, and last spring the staff

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of the Clínicas Hospital led the first street demonstrations since protests against a visit by Nelson Rockefeller in 1969. The most unlikely new organization is Women for Democracy. Stroessner calls them "agitators." I met the group over tea and petit fours. They were the kind of women I had seen pictured dancing at the Yacht Club in the social pages.

The guest of honor was Virginia Taylor, the wife of U.S. ambassador Clyde Taylor, to make up for what happened in February when Women for Democracy first tried to have a dinner for the Taylors. Police teargassed the house, the only time in history a friendly Western government has deliberately gassed a U.S. ambassador. Taylor, who has said some uncomplimentary things about Stroessner's rule, is not popular with the government. Stroessner's ex-son-in-law has twice threatened in editorials to burn down the embassy, and government communiqués speak darkly of "interventionism in our internal affairs."

Still, despite these recent signs of movement, no one thinks Paraguay is about to change. Through the party, Stroessner's control of his country is firmer than that of the former military rulers of his recently democratized neighbors: Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. There is no independent military leader who could conceivably lead a coup. The United States has never backed up its opposition to the dictator by blocking multilateral loans. Brazil, the most influential of Paraguay's neighbors, has big investments that it does not want to risk losing if Stroessner goes. As for social mobilization, the Clínicas Hospital protests were not about politics, but pay. And only about eight of 700 doctors are really politically active.

MEANWHILE, it's business as usual. The boom of the late '70s is over now. Statistical measures of prosperity are all stagnant; since 1980 income per capita, for example, has dropped from $1,200 to about half that. The situation is worst in the countryside. One percent of the landowners have 75 percent of the land, and they are busily snapping up the rest. Peasants suddenly find themselves evicted because some distant big shot has "bought" their land. Five hundred families whose land was sold to a Chilean recently refused to leave. (The word is that the Chilean bought the land as a retirement site for Gen. Augusto Pinochet.) Police have cordoned off the area. Two sick children died in February when police wouldn't let them go to a hospital.

Yet the dismal statistics on the above-ground economy don't reflect the underground boom. Paraguay's productive sector has been strangled by the institutionalized corruption. A vegetable canner pays the local police to protect him from thieves, pays tax inspectors for the right to pay taxes, and pays his suppliers for the right to buy their raw materials. He pays the labor and social security officials, for without their goodwill his workers' payments into the social security fund will not be registered. The most important business decision one can make in Paraguay is to join the party. "If you declare yourself a Stroessnerite," says Alcivedes Gonzalo del Valle, a journalist, "you can get bank credits, tax holidays, and contracts for public works. Otherwise you don't have the slightest chance."

Often manufacturers of food or clothing are driven out of business by smuggled goods from Argentina and Brazil. It is not difficult to get into smuggling in Paraguay if you have the right connections. And if you don't, you can buy them. Says Martin Burt, "Stroessner will send you to a customs official, who will either 'solve your problem' or 'arrange your situation.' Generally, 'arranging your situation' is more expensive." Paraguay imports eight to ten bottles of liquor per person a day. In most cases, the importer pays a tiny "in transit" tax—equivalent to legal smuggling—and then does what he likes; I counted 52 varieties of Scotch in an Asunción supermarket. But most liquor is smuggled out or sold in Ciudad Stroessner for six or seven dollars a bottle.

About 80 percent of the cars in Paraguay are either smuggled from Brazil—called "mau" ("bad" in Portuguese)—or stolen and smuggled ("mau-mau"). The Brazilian government hired a team of lawyers and detectives to find and recover the 55,000 to 60,000 mau-maus. The problem, says the lawyer in charge, is not finding the cars, but persuading government officials who own them to give up the cars rather than beat up the detective. In any town outside of Asunción, one can get new license plates and papers from city hall in minutes, no questions asked, which explains why about half the cars on Asunción's streets have plates marked with tiny cities with long Guarani names. The latest rumor here is that Brazilian cars are going to Bolivia as payment for cocaine shipments.

Business groups—traditional backers of Stroessner—have begun to complain about the relentless shakedown. The Paraguayan Industrial Union even started its own investigations into contraband. "But the first people our investigators visited were our own members," says Guillermo Caballero Vargas, a wealthy businessman and one of the few union members who has always opposed the government. "When we talk about fighting contraband, we're attacking [Stroessner's] political base. It is the way the government rewards those who give it support."

QUITE APART from its distinguished list of political retirees (assorted ex-Nazis, Juan Perón of Argentina, and Anastasio Somoza, who was gunned down in Asunción after the Sandinistas had chased him out of Nicaragua), Paraguay has been a haven for international criminals. Auguste Ricord, of "French Connection" fame, used an Asunción nightclub as the hub of a Marseilles-Asunción-New York operation that brought $145 million in heroin into the United States. A top Paraguayan general provided Ricord with planes and an air taxi service. Two other high officials chipped in an airstrip and fake passports, and fingered drug agents. The United States wanted Paraguay to extradite Ricord in 1971, but Paraguay scoffed at our threat to cut off aid. Paraguay finally extradited Ricord in 1972, after one of his protectors died. Ricord's chief benefactor was the powerful Gen. Andrés Rodríguez. He owns the Versailles replica.

Bad as it is today, Paraguay after Stroessner looks worse.

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Like any good totalitarian, Stroessner has built a machine that will endure even after he is gone. There will probably be a bloody fight for power, followed by the ascension of a Rodríguez or some other general equally content with the current system. The improbability that Paraguay's corruption and fear will disappear with Stroessner can best be appreciated from General Rodríguez's front lawn.

TINA ROSENBERG

Tina Rosenberg wrote about television in Belize in the December 8, 1986, issue.

How to fight imports the right way.

WHAT FORD CAN AFFORD

WHAT IS Ford Motor Company going to do with its profits? On April 29 Ford announced that it had made $1.5 billion in the first quarter of 1986. That comes out to about $900 in profits per vehicle worldwide, and $1,200 in the United States and Canada, where more profitable models are a bigger share of the market. Ford's stock promptly rose six dollars a share. But the profits won't mean much unless a portion of them is passed on to consumers in the form of lower car prices. Only by cutting prices can Ford challenge the imports—not just Chrysler and GM—for market share in the United States and even in export markets. If Ford does not cut prices, eventually its profits will be gobbled up, and its good news will be remembered only as a last hurrah for U.S. manufacturing.

Ford has shown that a well-run company in the most important Rustbelt industry can make money and gain on its U.S. competitors by producing more attractive automobiles and holding down costs. But Ford and the other U.S. car companies have not taken back market share from imports. The auto industry still contributed over $44 billion to the U.S. trade deficit in 1986, although the weaker dollar is squeezing the profits of the Japanese and Germans. And the U.S. companies have not begun to be able to export aggressively from North America to other markets. Until they can, "competitiveness" is just a slogan.

To be competitive Ford has to show it has the guts and the will to compete on price. It is where the Japanese companies were in the 1960s. If Ford acts boldly, as Japanese carmakers did then, and cuts prices to improve its share of the world market, it could strike an important blow for an economic recovery in the United States. In conjunction with the higher prices for imports, it would increase U.S. market share for the first time since the 1960s. What's equally important, it would discourage foreign competitors aiming to repeat Japan's triumph in this market.

With profits of over $1,000 per car, Ford could cut its prices by several hundred dollars. GM and Chrysler, which are profitable now too, though less so than Ford, could do the same. Part of the price cut could be covered by simultaneously cutting bonuses. The Big Three doled out $410 million to about 7,000 top employees. If you bought a car or truck in 1986, roughly $40 of your money went to these executives. Top managers should forgo the bonuses as their contribution to a more aggressive pricing strategy.

Ford could combine its price cuts with a new tactic for holding down labor costs. Hourly wages in the auto industry are still 40 percent higher than the average industrial wage and 54 percent higher than the average private wage. Surprisingly, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that auto workers actually have gained on other workers since 1979. The difference between auto wages and the average manufacturing wage is about four dollars per hour, or roughly $400 per car, not including the cost of benefits. If a significant portion of higher profits and executive bonuses were used to pay for a price cut now, Ford plausibly could ask the United Auto Workers in this summer's labor negotiations to maintain wages at current levels. If Ford also announced a long-term strategy to win back market share—and create new jobs in the process—the UAW would have good reason to cooperate. For a generation the Japanese have successfully controlled costs in order to be competitive in foreign markets, and this discipline must work here too if competitiveness is to be more than a slogan.

FORD, ALAS, probably will not be so sensible. First, it has gained on GM and Chrysler, and top managers may feel that is good enough. Unlike Japanese firms, American companies do not live or die by gaining market share internationally. Second, U.S. companies traditionally cut prices only when they have to; they don't usually use pricing to muscle their competitors. The American company that is lagging behind will offer price incentives long before the healthy company that is trying to stay ahead. In the new international economy, this 1960s style of pricing is an anachronism. Third, stockholders like big profits. Of course, what shareholders ignore is that such profits cannot last. They guarantee irresistible demands for wage increases and eventually further losses to the foreign companies.

A fourth reason Ford may not cut prices is that the Reagan administration and the American public will not push it to do so. The administration wants to keep prices down all right, but it lacks the imagination to do this with any tool other than high interest rates and recession. Nothing would serve the country better in the economic arena than a strategy of vigorous price cutting by American industrial firms to complement and drive home the advantage of the weaker dollar. But successive administrations have been too unimaginative to seek the obvious. While talking about competition, they have forgotten that the essence of competition is pricing.

The strongest argument for a price cut now is that we need to send a message to foreigners saying that U.S. competitors are going to be tough, and to think twice

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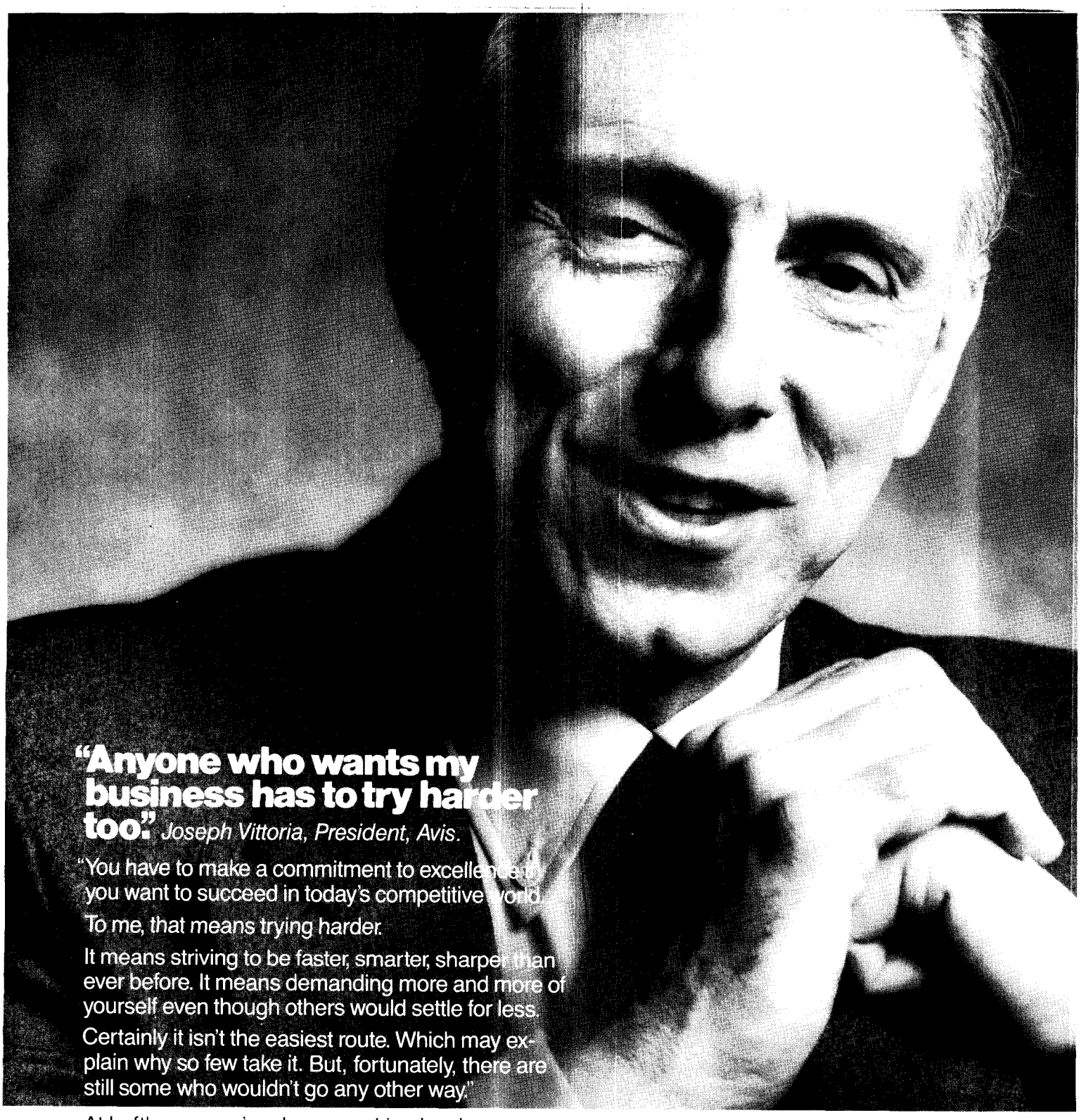
"Anyone who wants my business has to try harder too." Joseph Vittoria, President, Avis.
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It means striving to be faster, smarter, sharper than ever before. It means demanding more and more of yourself even though others would settle for less.
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about trying to sell here. If this message is not sent, history shows that foreign competitors will do a better job of keeping costs down, and will learn to compete with a weak dollar as they did when the dollar fell in the late 1970s. Ford's recent successes will erode quickly.

All Americans have a stake in lower car prices, whether or not they're buying a new Ford. Lower prices for cars and other U.S. industrial products would counter expected increases in the prices of imports of all kinds. Less inflation would lead to lower U.S. interest rates instead of rising ones. Faster growth in the United States would encourage more investment and stable exchange rates. Foreign countries would be forced to grow not by exporting to us but by spending at home. If American industry doesn't have the desire to win back markets now, it never will.

PAUL A. LONDON

Paul A. London is a Washington-based economic consultant.

The making of Iranamok.

CONSTRUCTING SCANDAL

THE CONGRESSIONAL Iranamok hearings are upon us. If they reveal new White House horrors, the public scandal, now in remission, may boil over once again. The hearings present themselves as a factual investigation. They should be seen, however, as part of the scandal-generating process itself. Scandals are not discovered; they are made.

Iranamok reveals the threat to democracy implicit in the modern presidency, but it is not by any means the most flagrant such illustration in recent times. If we take Reagan's crime to be conducting potentially dangerous foreign policy in secret, can we possibly compare its ramifications to Kennedy's unknown plans to invade Cuba or his assassination campaign against Castro? To Johnson's self-consciously deceitful conduct of the Vietnam War? To Nixon's secret war against Cambodia?

If we take Reagan's crime to be undermining the norms of the domestic polity, can we compare it to the actual rigging of the process itself: the CIA's compromise of domestic institutions such as the National Student Association, condoned in secret by a series of postwar presidents? Ford's rigged pardon of Nixon? Kennedy's and Johnson's buggings and implicit blackmail of Martin Luther King? In a purely objective sense, the misdeeds of our current president are no different than those of most of his predecessors. None of these other misdeeds, when reported, created the scandal that Iranamok has.

But scandals are not objective; they are constructed by their societies. The meaning of facts depends on their interpretation; what the public makes of political events depends upon the framework within which they are viewed. Public discussion will construct events as scandalous when it places them in the frame of outraged legal or moral concern.

In terms of objective events, Watergate entered the public imagination on even flimsier evidence than Iranamok. What allowed the break-in to the Democratic headquarters to become scandalous if it was not the initial facts? It was a switch in the background against which the facts were seen. Between Nixon's first and second terms a dramatic shift occurred in the moral climate of the nation, from polarization to incipient equanimity. Nixon had justified his anti-civil tactics against a setting that sometimes looked like imminent civil war. By the time he had scuttled the candidacy of George McGovern, however, the threat from the left had almost entirely disappeared. The public was ready to criticize the tactics that, fearing chaos, it had once silently supported. The Watergate break-in was now seen as anti-democratic extremism, a resonance of an old Nixon whom many had long mistrusted. Paradoxically, Nixon then became the scapegoat for an era he himself hated. The democratic rules of the game were restored, and a new period of equilibrium began.

This new perception of political events, even while it transformed the meaning of Nixon's acts, was not enough by itself to create a major scandal. The morality play had to be fueled by the political strategizing of self-interested elites. For four years Nixon and his men had schemed against powerful liberal and mostly Democratic Great Society elements. He failed to roll back their achievements, but he did not fail to arouse their undying wrath. Nixon had no cushion of goodwill. During Watergate, then, these lawyers and intellectuals, bureaucrats and media figures, movement activists and religious leaders—our version of the clerisy—all had their revenge. Because the American opinion-making elites are primarily liberal and Democratic, only the deeds of right-wing presidents can cause political scandal. Although liberal agendas often stimulate populist resistance, they do not mobilize sustained and avenging counterforces in the metropolis where the national mood is formed.

If Iranamok is the second major scandal of the postwar era, it is only because Reagan's misdeeds have been subjected to a similar if less dramatic shift in the social environment. A new moral framework has been constructed for events that until recently were viewed in an entirely different way.

AS THE 1986 congressional elections indicated, the rightward swing of the political pendulum has stopped. *Time* magazine has already pronounced the American public ready for an active and humane government once again. It is this shift, not some loss of personal skill, that has deprived Reagan of his moral magic. It was because his symbolic authority had already deflated that presidential accounts of Iranamok were subjected to scrutiny and unbelief. Just as powerful a sea change has occurred on the

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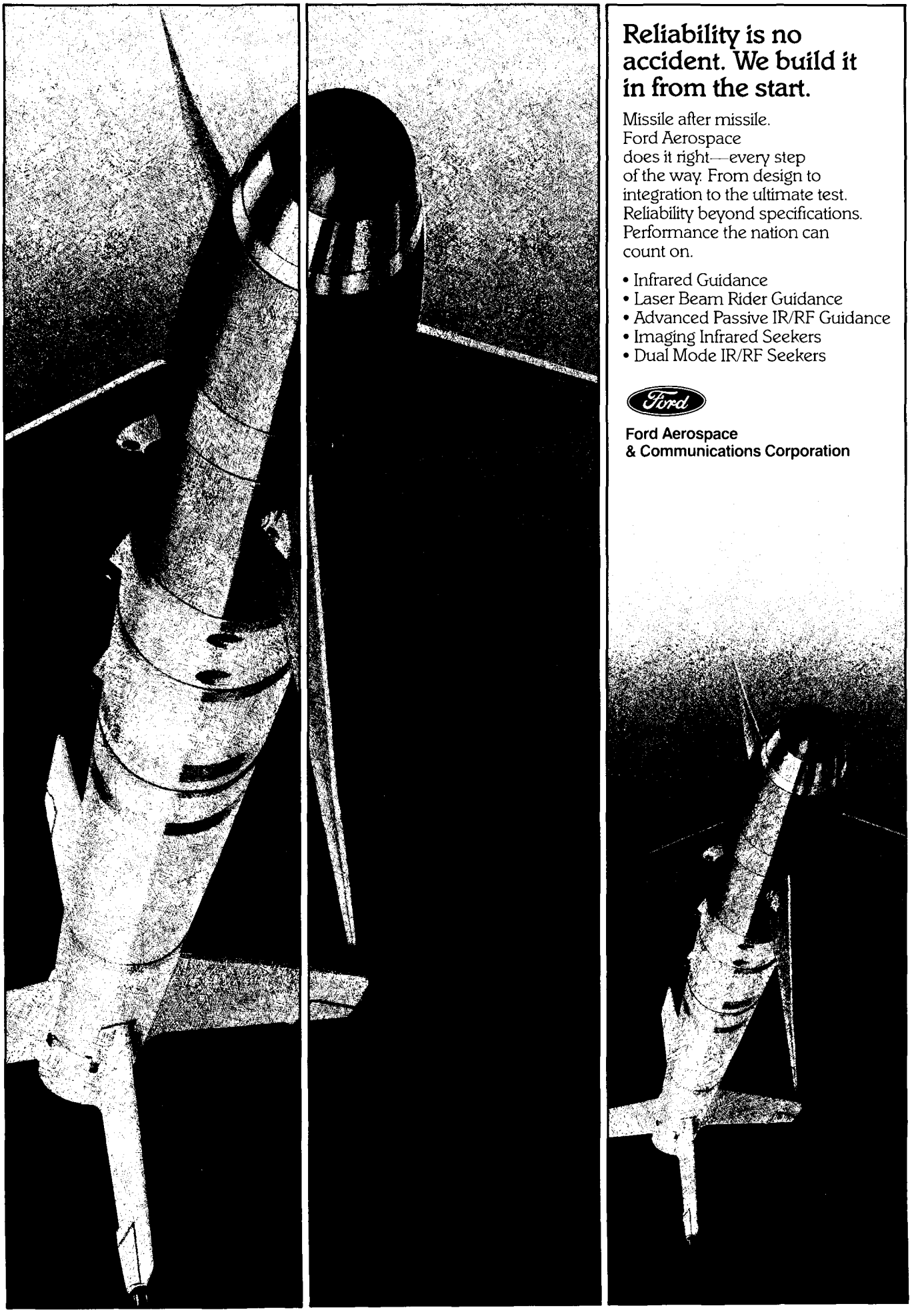

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foreign front. Under Gorbachev, Russia no longer appears as the blundering but bullying giant. With the evil empire less maniacal, sabotaging democracy at home to support the *contras* in Nicaragua now appears less justifiable.

Nor is the structural component missing from this new moral configuration. Compared with Nixon, of course, Reagan has been less extreme in his rhetoric against liberal elites and less manipulative in his tactics. His intent has been the same, however, and he has been noticeably more effective. The same damaged interests—Washington reporters and nuclear freeze advocates, congressional leaders and critical intellectuals, civil rights leaders and trade union officials—now leap at the chance to wreak their revenge.

It is not yet clear how far this social construction of the Iranamok scandal can go. Because the activist left has been moribund for some time, at least domestically, and because Reagan is not nearly as confrontational as Nixon, the social fuel for scandal is commensurably less. The shift in the moral frame has also been less radical this time around. Public opinion may now support government activism, but the new fiscal populism continues to carry the imprint of the president. And though middle Americans are loath to arm the *contras*, everybody is "against" the Sandinistas—another instance of Reagan's sway, however inadequate it may be for him. By the time of Nixon's second administration, the movements of the 1960s, which had provided the rationale for his extralegal actions, had gone into decline. The Communists in Central America will not so easily go away. For all of these reasons, Reagan cannot be entirely hoist with his own petard.

WE WILL KNOW how this scandal construction proceeds by how seriously the public perceives the crime. Executive incompetence, NSC intrigue, and arms profiteering are not the stuff of massive public outrage. Neither is the violation of even a raft of civil codes or, as long as only subordinates are concerned, criminal laws. Only if the public comes to believe that a great moral wrong has been done will it be aroused to a fever pitch. For this to happen, a president who has been the very embodiment of folk morality will have to be placed in a radically new light.

Judging from the initial days of the Iranamok hearings, such a transformation seems unlikely but not impossible. A certain momentum has been successfully created. The media and intellectuals have a new framework already in place. Speaking for a large minority of Americans, they have begun to transform the extralegal *contra* aid from patriotic excess into a secret, frightening, and anti-democratic cabal.

But Reagan does not easily take to the part of Richard III. Rather than being secretive, he answers his accusers in public forums each day, a little goofily to be sure, but without apparent self-doubt. The president, moreover, continues to have friends on the congressional committees and in Congress, some of whom think that what was done for the *contras*, if not through Iran, was justified, that the anti-Communist ends justify illegal means. Finally, it has been committee counsel who have lodged pointed questions of moral indignation, not the congressmen themselves. Congressional questioners have stuck largely to facts and legal inquiries, and thus far Chairman Daniel Inouye has failed to play any symbolic role. Reagan's conciliatory style and the country's lingering suspicions about liberalism may have prevented this strategic elite from being alienated enough.

While American society has constructed a serious scandal, it has not yet produced a major political crisis. If presidential involvement begins to seem more than a possibility, this may yet occur. The stakes of the hearings will sharply rise, mortal danger to the nation's center will seem imminent, congressional questioners will become anguished, and real political drama will ensue. At this point, however, the Iranamok hearings often seem more like an IRS audit than a wrenching morality play. Only when we see contrite confessors rather than harassed functionaries will we know that we are on our way.

JEFFREY C. ALEXANDER

Jeffrey C. Alexander is professor of sociology at UCLA and the author most recently of *Twenty Lectures: Sociological Theories Since World War II* (Columbia University Press).

Is the Peres plan worth a U.S. plunge?

PEACE NIX

"IF YOU ASK ME, on a scale of zero to ten, what are the chances that a Mideast peace conference will be held," said a member of the U.S. House of Representatives with a deep interest in the area, "I'd say two or three. And the chances for success? One or two. But what are the chances of war if there is no agreement? I'd say eight or nine, and the long-term consequences for Israel are bleak. I don't think we should pursue a diplomatic track just for the sake of doing it, but if there's any chance of success, it's worth taking."

This congressman is a Democrat, but on the subject of Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres's proposal for an international conference on the Mideast, his views are close to those of the Reagan administration: the chances aren't great, but Peres's plan is all we have. Administration officials don't think an Arab-Israeli war is likely anytime soon because the region is consumed with the wars under way right now in Lebanon and the Gulf. But one official said, "If you don't have a peace process going on, frustrations build, the mischief-makers have the initiative, and we don't have a grip on events."

In September 1982 Secretary of State George Shultz tried to mount a Kissinger-style peace initiative, but it fell apart when Israel rejected it as an attempt to impose a settlement

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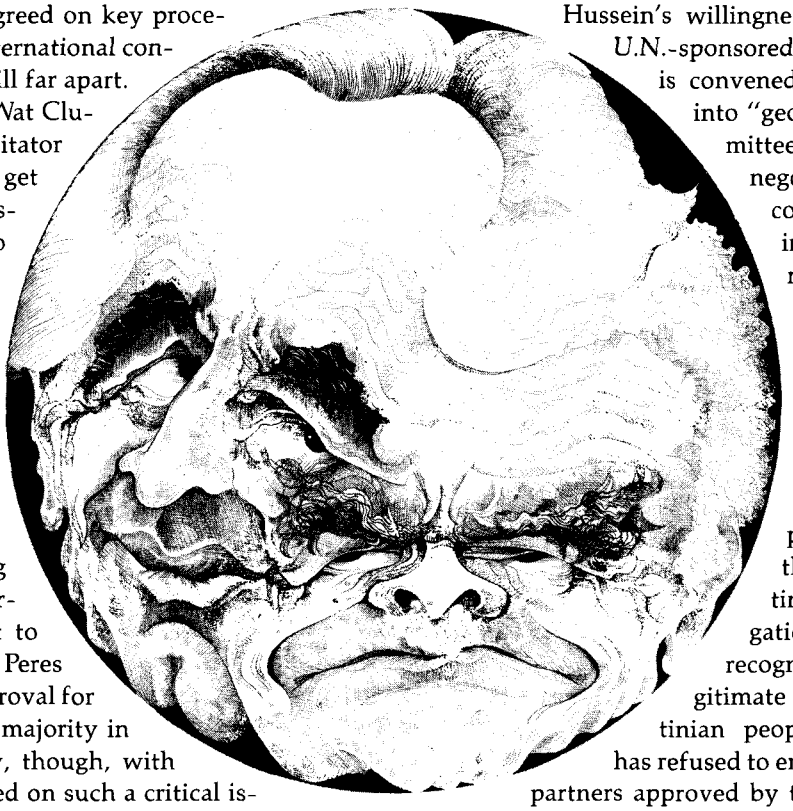
and create a Palestinian state federated with Jordan, and when the moderate Arabs couldn't muscle the PLO into allowing King Hussein to negotiate with Israel. Since then the administration has been accused by critics of passivity or "sulking," but officials claim it has really been pursuing a strategy—that of waiting until the parties in the region are making progress on their own before taking what one official calls "the plunge." "Plunges by a secretary of state are what you do when it's the final thing necessary to produce a breakthrough," he said. "But if there are huge gaps between the parties and you plunge in, all you do is fall to the bottom."

Even though King Hussein has been working—"valiantly," one official said—to build his influence among the Palestinians, and even though Peres and Hussein met face to face in London and agreed on key procedural principles for an international conference, the parties are still far apart. A U.S. diplomat named Wat Cluverius has acted as a facilitator to help Jordan and Israel get this far, but there is no disposition by Shultz to make another premature plunge.



The difficulties involved in getting to an international conference begin in Israel. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is dead set against the idea, so Peres is in the process of trying to break up Israel's Labor-Likud unity government to get new elections held. Peres failed to win Cabinet approval for elections, and he lacks a majority in the Knesset. Presumably, though, with the government so divided on such a critical issue, it cannot stand, and elections will be held sometime this year.

Then it's up to Peres to win them—that is, to improve Labor's standing in the Knesset in a way that will be interpreted as a mandate for talking to Hussein about giving up part of the West Bank in return for peace. Even though he now leads Shamir in the polls (51 percent to 26 percent in approval ratings), Peres could fail politically because an Israeli majority rejects the idea of a territorial settlement, because it fears an international peace conference in which the Soviet Union will play a role, or because voters are angry with Peres for breaking up the once-popular unity government now that he's no longer prime minister.

Yet another stumbling block—a huge one—may come in the form of the report by a Knesset commission headed by former Foreign Minister Abba Eban on high-level complicity in the Pollard spy case in the United States. Peres was prime minister when Pollard began committing espionage for Israel. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin may be even more deeply affected, and Peres needs Rabin, a former general, to counter charges from former Gen. Ariel Sharon and other Likud hawks that he is endangering Israel's security. He needs Rabin to certify that it's safe to give up territory for peace.

The Reagan administration prefers Labor to Likud but is trying not to tilt in public. After meeting with Peres in New York and Washington on May 16 and 17, Shultz said in an address before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that "President Reagan and I are not committed to an international conference. We are not asking others to make a commitment at this time. We believe, however, that Jordan is sincere and there is a real opportunity."

Specifically, administration officials see progress in Hussein's willingness to agree that once a U.N.-sponsored international conference is convened, it would break down into "geographical bilateral committees" to engage in serious negotiations, and the overall conference would neither impose solutions on the negotiators nor veto any agreement reached by them. Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation would engage in negotiating on the West Bank.

The most difficult problem of all remains the makeup of the Palestinian portion of the delegation. The Arab world still recognizes the PLO as sole legitimate spokesman for the Palestinian people. Hussein previously has refused to enter negotiations without partners approved by the PLO chairman, Yasir Arafat. Israel will not negotiate with anyone closely identified with the PLO, and the United States will not accede to PLO participation unless it recognizes Israel's right to exist and renounces terrorism. Arafat previously has refused to agree to Jordanian negotiations with Israel and has blocked participation by West Bank Palestinians in peace talks. To make matters even less promising, the PLO recently was reunified with radical factions that are even more hostile to negotiations than Arafat's Fatah.

How can this jam be broken? "The best case," said an administration official, "is for the Palestinians to say, 'There is a real chance for an agreement here,' and for Arafat to move closer to Hussein." A slightly more plausible (and certainly more desirable) scenario would be for Hussein to tell Arafat to approve negotiations or get lost—and proceed into talks without the PLO if he failed to get approval. Hussein would either have to go it alone or find Palestinian partners independent of the PLO. This

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would require him and them to show courage and independence comparable to Anwar Sadat's, which so far no Arab has been willing to do. Administration officials hope that this time it might be different. The motive, they say, would be to gain a truly forthcoming attitude on the Israeli side.

This might get Hussein to the table with Israel. It still would not achieve a peace settlement, which would depend upon Israel's willingness to relinquish enough territory to Jordanian-Palestinian sovereignty that Hussein would not be humiliated. Polls show Israel split down the middle on the issue of territorial settlement, which actually encourages administration officials to think that, given a genuine Jordanian offer of peace, Israel might part with a piece of the West Bank.

However, still other complications arise from the international conference format that Peres and Hussein are working on. They anticipate that the Soviet Union would agree to participate in an opening ceremony and then recede to allow Jordan and Israel to negotiate a separate peace that would add to the prestige and influence of the United States and do nothing to advance the aims of Soviet clients such as the PLO and Syria. Under Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviets have been striving to increase their influence in the Middle East—notably, by engineering the PLO reunification. They aren't likely to agree to deal themselves out of the action.

American officials who can find reasons for optimism say that Soviet gains in the Middle East have been limited. "I take it with a grain of salt that the Soviets are on the march," one said. "They have a PLO card, but it's of no use to them unless they want to sell it to us for some concession. Otherwise, they're just being obstructionist. They are not in a strong position in the Middle East. Their client, Syria, is formidable, but it's independent, and in 1974 Assad came to us because we had something to deliver. If diplomacy actually gets going, we will be in the strong position because we have something to offer and the Soviets don't"—namely, the ability to persuade Israel to give land back to the Arabs.

The model that some administration officials have for progress is the Geneva conference that followed the 1973 Middle East war, in which Henry Kissinger carefully prepared the way ahead of time and got Syria, Egypt, and Israel to expect agreements on disengagement to come out of the talks. The Soviets were taken by surprise, and agreements actually were reached. "In the present situation," said one official, "you do need to get more pieces in place," especially on Palestinian participation. This official anticipates that some advance progress also would have to be made for Israel and Syria to talk about the future of the Golan Heights. Right now there seems no disposition for that on either side.

The idea that "more pieces have to be in place" seems, in fact, a gross understatement. At the moment there is very little in place except a desire by Peres to break up the Israeli government and get back into power, plus a willingness on King Hussein's part to help him. Administration optimists like to think that this can develop into a self-fulfilling prophecy of peace. Unfortunately, the Middle East at the moment looks like the same old maze in which all the avenues lead to a dead end.

MORTON KONDRACKE

A war of survival or conquest?

ISRAEL'S GREAT VICTORY

BY MICHAEL WALZER

Jerusalem

Twenty years later, nothing has been decided. Depending on who is counting, there have been two or three or four wars since 1967 (the 1969-72 war of attrition, the 1973 Yom Kippur war, the 1978 Litani operation, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon). Moshe Dayan's famous telephone rang only once; the Egyptian who called is dead by an assassin's bullet; the peace with Egypt, the major achievement of these 20 years, is incomplete; and no other sign of an "overall" peace is in sight. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza goes on and on, with both Arabs and Jews, it seems, increasingly inured to its pain. Terrorism is an everyday business, a lost generation of Palestinians simultaneously its agents and chief victims. Right now, as I am writing, Jerusalem is full of rumors about peace conferences and peace plans—but the immediate popular response, in Israel, on the West Bank, probably in Jordan and Egypt too, is one of disbelief, cynicism, and anxiety. It hasn't been a wonderful 20 years.

Before remembering the Israeli victory, it is important to say something about the crisis of confidence that immediately preceded it and that probably determined its moral and psychological impact. The crisis of May 1967 was above all one of leadership; popular fears were more

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a reflection of indecision at the top than a spontaneous upsurge from below. Looking back, it is easy to see the importance of the political arrangement that brought Menachem Begin and Moshe Dayan into the Cabinet on the eve of Israel's pre-emptive strike. Here, as an Israeli friend said to me the other day, was the first "fall" of the Labor Party, the first national unity government, and the decisive rehabilitation of Menachem Begin. No one in the Labor government of 1956, during the Suez campaign, even thought of consulting Begin and his allies. But in May 1967, Labor's leaders believed that the risks of war were so great, they were so fearful of military failure, that they dared not order the attack on their own. Their hesitation in the last weeks of May is a sure sign that the crisis was real, not cooked up to justify the pre-emptive strike and the great victory, as some critics have alleged. Had he anticipated the victory, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol would never have chosen to share it with Begin. And if the war had been fought in May rather than in June, without the intervening weeks of fear, the victory might have had a different political meaning.

IT STILL SEEMS to me a just and necessary war. Had Israel's leaders been unwilling to fight, in the face of Nasser's military moves, they would have risked the state's survival—which is not what they were elected to do. But the size and scope of the victory brought territorial gains that went far beyond what Israel needed for survival and that soon tested the limits of justice. The victory seemed so great precisely because expectations were so low; and the test then facing Israel's leaders was especially hard because the country was entirely unprepared to rule over a large Arab population. No one had worked out a policy for governing the occupied territories. In those first months, Israel's leaders hemmed, hawed, and improvised; and the far right, which at least knew what it wanted, readied itself to seize the new opportunities. David Ben-Gurion, the retired prime minister, saw the dangers and urged the return of the conquered territories. Eshkol insisted, but perhaps not firmly enough, that Israel had no territorial ambitions. Jerusalem was the first exception to this rule—an easy exception since the Jordanians had behaved so badly in the city. But soon there were other exceptions, sentimental, ideological, and strategic, with no coherent moral or political justification. Yigal Allon tried to provide an argument for holding only the Jordan Valley, and some such view is still official Labor Party policy. But that policy makes it difficult to figure out how to return the detached remainder to Jordan—a difficulty eagerly exploited by those who don't want to return anything at all.

Not even right-wing politicians anticipated the revival of religious zealotry that followed upon the great victory. It was as if the Egyptian army had been miraculously swept away by the waters of the Red Sea, as if the sun had stood still over the Golan. Only a tiny minority of Israelis actually concluded that they were living in messianic times, but these few seemed able, for a while, to tap the mythic consciousness of a whole people. Perhaps more important (I have my doubts about the mythic consciousness), the zealots provided a way for religious young people to act out a heroism they had previously missed. The pioneers of Jewish settlement in Palestine were secular and socialist in character. Now suddenly there were new settlements in the new (conquered/liberated) territories, and the pioneers were pious yeshiva students, toting guns and dreaming, some of them, of Armageddon. Not real pioneers, it seems to me, for they did not work the land and their guns were mostly ornamental. Effective protection was provided by the Israeli army, which is still, thank God, a secular institution. But it would be a mistake to underestimate the passion of the settler elite. It is not, strictly speaking, their own fault that even the first and most idealistic of them were latecomers, their zeal literally misplaced. They could have settled in the Negev and served their people better.

Though Palestinian organizations existed before 1967, it was the great victory that gave them space in which to move. By seizing Gaza from the Egyptians and the West Bank from the Jordanians, Israel took upon itself the full force of Palestinian nationalism. No longer did Jordan have to justify its own seizure of territory; nor did Egypt have to defend its harsh control and cruel neglect of the Gaza strip. The Palestinians claimed the support of the entire Arab world and focused all their attention on the destruction of Israel. They had, however, no means equal to their end. Their policies were summed up in political rejection and terrorist attack. It would be a mistake, again, to underestimate the passion of the young recruits to terrorism. But their attacks on civilian targets discredited their own cause and strengthened the Israeli right. The leaders of the PLO have wasted, and continue to waste, the idealism of their young. The politics of rejectionism compounds the waste. Not once in 20 years have the Palestinians managed a political initiative that prodded or embarrassed the Israeli government or threw it on the defensive. I can think of no people so ill-served by a liberation movement.

IMAGINE A PLO that renounced terrorism, called for self-determination for the West Bank and Gaza, proclaimed its readiness to sign a peace treaty with Israel, and organized non-violent demonstrations throughout the occupied territories. An Israeli government headed by Yitzhak Shamir would no doubt reject any such initiative—but at what cost, internally and internationally! And for how long could the rejection be sustained? In fact, however, the PLO has never seriously attempted a political challenge to the people of Israel. Committed to a mythical "armed struggle," it succeeds only in an occasional murder.

This is the reiterated pattern of PLO politics, illustrated once again in recent weeks: one step forward (the pact with King Hussein), one step backward (the renunciation of the pact at the Algiers conference), one step

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Among The Anti-Semites

Twenty years after the Six-Day War and almost 40 after the creation of the State of Israel, a British Zionist is bound to reflect on why the birth of the new nation seemed to matter so much, and why its existence is an irreducible moral commitment that should still call forth our passions.

When Jerusalem's principal hotel, the King David, was blown up in July 1946 by Irgun, the Jewish terrorist group commanded by Menachem Begin, I was the callow editorial writer of the *Manchester Evening News*, the evening newspaper of the pro-Zionist *Manchester Guardian*. The public in Britain was enraged; 28 of the 91 people killed were British, many of them army officers. I wrote an editorial arguing that though the act of terrorism was shameful, it did not alter Britain's moral responsibility to create a Jewish state in Palestine. That evening angry crowds gathered outside the *Guardian & Evening News* office and smashed its plate glass windows. A year later, after Jewish terrorists murdered two British sergeants in cold blood and booby-trapped their bodies, there were anti-Semitic riots in Manchester and other large British cities.

Yet it was Britain that had pledged in the Balfour Declaration in 1917 that a Jewish National Home should be created in Palestine, and in the following years, in honor of that pledge and exercising the mandate in Palestine that it sought from the League of Nations in 1922, it permitted Jews to immigrate there. A Jewish National Home did not necessarily mean an independent Jewish state. But such an end was made inevitable by one of the asinine acts that frequently marked British colonial policy. In 1921 Britain not only authorized a Supreme Muslim Council to govern all religious matters in Palestine; it appointed Mohammed Amin al-Husseini to be the mufti—or supreme justice—of Jerusalem. Only the year before, British authorities had sentenced him to ten years' hard labor for inciting anti-Jewish riots. His life was mercilessly dedicated to the genocide of the Jewish people.

So between the wars the British simultaneously permitted Jewish immigration into Palestine and kept in power a man who ordered not only the savage murders of Jewish settlers but the no less systematic killing of Arab moderates. The mufti's behavior pressured the surrounding Arab states into an extremist position, and exhausted the patience of Jewish moderates. In this graceless situation in 1939, the result of Britain's policy of "divide and rule," the British Foreign Office issued a White Paper that in effect halted Jewish immigration into Palestine. This was a repudiation of the Balfour Declaration. Churchill rightly called it a "breach of faith."

Worse was to come. After Hitler overran Europe, boatloads of Jewish refugees tried to get from the Continent to Palestine, but were stopped by the Royal Navy. In December 1941 a ship called the *Struma*, carrying 769 Jewish refugees, managed to get from Romania to Turkey. There its engines failed. Denied landing by the Turks, the Jews sat off Istanbul for two months. In February 1942 the British informed Turkey that it could not permit "shiploads of unwanted Jews" to enter Palestine, whereupon the Turks towed the unseaworthy tub out to sea, where it sat until it was torpedoed or struck a mine. There was one survivor. Meanwhile the British were still sustaining the mufti, and the next year, when the gas ovens of the Holocaust really got going, a photograph of the mufti and Himmler was inscribed by the chief of the SS to "His Eminence the Grossmufti."

Episodes such as that of the *Struma*, even before the real Holocaust began, horrified those in the civilized world who were not under Hitler's heel and finally enabled the Zionists to triumph among American Jewry, which until then had been acrimoniously divided on the issue. (American Jewish pressure came to be one of the influences that persuaded Truman to support the creation of the State of Israel.) But it is important to emphasize that gentile British Zionists, though repelled by their own government's inhumanity, were not fired only or primarily by the Holocaust, by sympathy for the Jews after it, or by guilt at the evil our civilization had permitted or perpetrated.

The Balfour Declaration was the work of a few individuals (Churchill was by far its most formidable supporter) in a Britain that was rife with anti-Semitism. It is true that British anti-Semitism was not virulent. It was civil and good-mannered, and all the more sedulous for that. It was everywhere as I grew up: at school, at Oxford, in aristocratic male clubs in London, and working-men's pubs. It was above all strong in the Foreign Office, which was stiff with pro-Arabs, and in the foreign secretary after the war, Ernest Bevin, who in 1947 threw the mandate in Palestine back to the United Nations.

It was quite clear to Zionists by that time that if the Jews were not allowed to create an independent state, the position of Jews in every other country in the world would continue to be as imperiled as it had been throughout Christian civilization. Though anti-Zionists today deny it, there is a profound connection between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. The little state of Israel is what prevents the undercurrent of anti-Semitism in all our countries from being translated into open discrimination, persecution, and even the Final Solution.

But the support for the creation of Israel was also fired by the understanding that it was the outpost of Western democratic societies. And in the 40 years since then, as in the Six-Day War, this tiny strip of a nation has shown a will to survive that the West needs as an example and an inspiration. It is still amazing to remember that, when the British finally withdrew from Palestine in 1948, leaving it to the arbitrament of war, the only force that Israel had was 21,000 men in Haganah, the defense wing of the Jewish Agency. Arrayed against Haganah were 10,000 Egyptians, 4,500 Jordanians, 7,000 Syrians, 3,000 Iraqis, 3,000 Lebanese, and the "Arab Liberation Army" of the Palestinians. Everyone predicted a fearful Israeli defeat. Everyone was wrong. Twenty years later the Six-Day War merely underlined this Israeli will to exist.

Ortega y Gasset said that European civilization was like a swarm: innumerable bees, but with a single flight. Israel when it was created and still today is one of the leaders of that swarm.

Henry Fairlie

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sideways (Arafat's "explanations" of what happened at Algiers). It is a dance, and sometimes a very skillful dance; it is not a march. Arafat survives, but he doesn't advance.

It is sometimes said that the conquests of 1967 internalized the struggle of Jews and Palestinians. The struggle must be settled, in this view, within the confines of Greater Israel, which is effectively now a binational state. In fact, however, Palestinian nationalism continues to be dominated by the Diaspora, by politicians-in-exile who still dream of a unitary Arab state. And there are not many Israelis prepared to grant citizenship and equal rights to a minority that is (by current demographic projections) well on its way to becoming a majority. Most Israelis are still committed to a unitary Jewish state. Israeli occupation policy also tends consistently to externalize the conflict by forcibly blocking any kind of Palestinian political organization within the territories. Where are the West Bank leaders who might shape a compromise settlement? They are, with few exceptions, jailed, deported, withdrawn in despair. (Alternatively, they have been assassinated by agents of the external PLO, or the Syrians, or the Iraqis, all of whom have their own reasons for opposing the politics of compromise.) The ordinary people of the West Bank and Gaza are Arafat supporters, if only by default—the youth especially so. This is the internal reality of Greater Israel, and the only future toward which it points is Lebanon's present.

THE HIGH TIDE of the Israeli right came five years ago this month with the Lebanese invasion—an effort to secure the West Bank by destroying Arafat's PLO. Gen. Ariel Sharon, and perhaps Prime Minister Begin, also had larger geopolitical designs, of the sort that people who spend too much time staring at maps have. A few religious fanatics appeared with their own maps, showing southern Lebanon as part of Solomon's kingdom. They were shouted down; the time for that particular idiocy had passed. And as the Lebanese war dragged on—every piece of land that Sharon touched turning instantly into mud, quicksand, quagmire—almost everyone began thinking again about geopolitics too. Begin's depression is an extreme example of the new sobriety. The dream of a single great military victory that would solve all problems, secretly nourished by memories of 1967, was among the casualties of Lebanon. It is now, I think, definitively dead.

In a sense, the high tide of the Israeli left also came during the Lebanon war—with the 400,000-strong mass demonstration after the Phalangist massacres in Sabra and Shatila. It has not been so easy for groups like Peace Now to mobilize against the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Israel could just walk out of Lebanon (or most of it), but it isn't possible to leave the territories without leaving them to someone else. Here peace requires a negotiating partner, a power or potential power that can guarantee the necessary security arrangements: an eastern Egypt. For 20 years the left has struggled to conjure up a plausible partner, and the right has insisted, with the help of Arab rejectionists, that no such partner exists. At this moment, Jordan may have emerged as the partner-in-waiting, though many Israelis believe that Shimon Peres is still conjuring, that the international conference is nothing but a magic trick. If there is a real peace process, there will be popular support for it—so at least my friends on the left tell me. Meanwhile, however, the conquered territories are more palpable, the land is beautiful, apartments are cheap, and a certain sort of religious idealism is cheaper still.

And yet it is possible, just possible, that the occupation is drawing (very slowly) to a close. Palestinian resistance is continuous and seems now irrepressible, despite Yitzhak Rabin's "iron fist" policy. If the resistance is more and more desperate, it is also, paradoxically, more and more sophisticated: student demonstrations are a great advance over terrorist attacks (though terrorism continues and it isn't clear that the PLO understands the difference). Military service in the territories, though nowhere near so unpopular as service in Lebanon was, is something few young Israelis look forward to; and their uneasiness must eventually be reflected in the politics of their families. There is some erosion of political support for the settlers, if only because of the enormous expense of the settlements, most of which are economically barren. I have to add that the daily brutalities and humiliations that the occupation inflicts on its subjects are not much talked about here. But some unarticulated sense that the occupation simply cannot be sustained morally or politically probably helps to explain the urgency of Peres's peace initiative. No doubt he has political ambitions too, and perhaps these are primary; but ambitions have taken many different forms these past 20 years. Once Peres worked for West Bank settlement; now he works more honorably at a West Bank withdrawal.

THE LEGACY of 1967 is twofold, ambiguous. On the one hand, the war was a war (as I believe) of necessary self-defense, and so the territories are provisionally held, pending a peace agreement. With various qualifications, this is the view of the Labor alliance, but it has never been asserted with full confidence and moral assurance. The crisis of May 1967 has long outlasted the great victory. On the other hand, the war was a war of conquest/liberation, and so the territories (with the exception of Sinai) are now part of Greater Israel. There will be no peace until the Arabs make their own peace with 1967 and accept their losses. This is the view of the Likud, consistently defended since the victory. From these two views very different policies follow and, in an odd way, these policies will determine how historians write the history of the Arab-Jewish conflict and how they describe the Six-Day War. What was the *real* character of the war? Was it a limited, defensive war? Or was it a war of conquest? Whatever its original purposes, only the final disposition of the West Bank and Gaza will answer these questions. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Two Kinds of Bafflement

Ishtar
(Columbia Pictures)
River's Edge
(Island Pictures)

Elaine May is the mystery woman of Hollywood. She has directed three films, two of which she wrote; and one of those two, *Mikey and Nicky*, is an important work. But mostly—at least it seems like mostly—she is invisible. She chooses to operate out of the public eye as a reputed one-woman salvage crew. She is often mentioned as an uncredited script collaborator, even as consulting director; without screen credit, she has worked on several scripts for Warren Beatty. Professionals speak of her, almost hushedly, with respect.

One of the Beatty scripts was *Reds*, of which he was producer, co-writer, director, and star, and which is an impressive film. It was downgraded by some as an incomplete account of the October Revolution; to me it was a complete account, though otherwise flawed, of American romance about European radical politics. At the least, *Reds* was a spectacular triumph over the conditions of filmmaking in this country.

Dustin Hoffman is one of our finest film actors. He is always a surprising talent because, in a sense, he always starts from scratch. Despite our experience with him, every time he begins it's hard to believe that out of this small frame and pinched face and mumbly speech can come art—ranging from the gritty pathos of *Midnight Cowboy* to the skittish comedy of *Tootsie*.

Who could have predicted that from the union of these three extraordinary people could come such a complete disaster as *Ishtar*? At a story conference it may have sounded like a mirthful idea for May to kick off with a Bob Hope-Bing Crosby formula, then make it funny two ways, in itself and as a parody of itself. In proof, her script is lame in plot and dismal in dialogue. Where was May's wit? Any five minutes of *The Secret of My Success* has twice as many laughs as all of *Ishtar*. May wrote only one of her two film comedies, not especially well (the other was botched by Neil Simon), but she has a huge reputation, deserved, as a satirist. You couldn't prove it with the *Ishtar* script. It's laborious from the start, and it takes a long time to get started, with long, explanatory flashbacks about the two leading characters. After it does get going, it goes nowhere—except for another, much inferior trip down the Hope-Crosby road to Morocco.

After May's initial failure came Beatty's misplaced enthusiasm for the script, followed by Hoffman's misguided acceptance of it, followed by May's pedestrian direction. All talented people have failures, but for three such talents to collaborate so long and energetically on such a catastrophe is baffling. If they became so involved in the project that they lost perspective, wasn't there anyone around who could enlighten them?

The story is about two dreadful New York songwriter-singers. (The "dreadful" part we believe.) They persuade an agent to get them a booking, which turns out to be in Morocco. En route they land in Ishtar, a country apparently named for the Babylonian love goddess and situated on the Moroccan border. There they get involved in a civil war because of Hoffman's encounter with a female guerrilla leader, Isabelle Adjani, concealed behind a burnoose most of the time. The local CIA chief recruits Hoffman to help in maneuvering the domestic war, and soon Beatty is embroiled too. This leads to, and proceeds from, a series of supposedly comic episodes so unfunny that they feel like assaults.

Hoffman is much more skillful at physical comedy than Beatty so he comes off marginally better in an equally dank role. Beatty, who handled a smoother kind of comedy more competently in *Shampoo* and *Heaven Can Wait*, simply doesn't spring alive in farce. There's no energy. We feel that he doesn't really believe in what he's doing. (And May's idea of writing his role wittily is to make him afraid of girls.) Charles Grodin, as the CIA chief, does some of his acceptable, quiet revue-sketch shtick. Adjani is wasted.

"Honest and popular don't go hand in hand" is a line from one of the songs that Beatty and Hoffman supposedly write—and that they sing twice so that the line seems shoved forward as a motto for the film. This is presumptuous. *Ishtar* is not too honest to be popular: it doesn't exist forcefully enough even to be dishonest. If the line from the song is supposed to be a crossing of fingers, they can be uncrossed. Popularity, I would guess, is probably not going to be at risk in any case.

River's Edge, a low-budget film about teenagers, strikes a chill to the heart more terrible than most so-called horror films that I've seen. The horror here is realistic, not fantastic. The script by Neil Jiminez is based on an occurrence in northern California. A high school boy strangles his girlfriend and speaks of it coolly to his gang of fellow students, boys and girls. They think he's just bragging, so he takes them to the river bank to see the body. They are not immediately horrified or frightened: they are awed

FILMS WORTH SEEING

My Life as a Dog. Humor, insight, sadness keep this account of a 12-year-old Swedish boy far from the maudlin and make it charming. (Reviewed 5/25/87)

Prick Up Your Ears. Memorable writing, acting, directing render the life of the English dramatist Joe Orton as macabre a comedy as his plays. (4/20/87)

Rosa Luxemburg. Margarethe von Trotta's direction and Barbara Sukowa's performance, both excellent, compensate in great measure for the shortcomings of the script. (5/18/87)

Tampopo. Food and sex are the two chief appetites in this wild Japanese comedy about a young widow who runs a noodle shop and the truck driver who helps her. (6/1/87)

SK

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by his action, as if he had won some kind of superdangerous drag race. At first they don't even think of informing anyone—their collusion with the murderer is a tacit statement of their unity against adults, including the police. It takes almost two days before one of the boys "narks" to the police, and some of the others despise him for doing it.

Other story lines are carried throughout, including one about a one-legged man, a recluse who gives drugs to the kids, dances with his life-size doll, and keeps saying calmly that he once killed a woman he loved. Jiminez evidently intends him both as contrast to and model for the teenagers, but the intention is a bit too clear, even though Dennis Hopper is rankly loony in the part. Almost all the other actors do adequately by their roles, especially Daniel Roebuck as the big, sluggish, somewhat sweet killer. The exception is the druggie who is the head of the gang and is supposed to have weird charisma but has only weird overacting.

The director is Tim Hunter, son of the well-known screenwriter Ian McLellan Hunter. A few years ago Hunter directed *Tex*, another film about teenagers but utterly different in tone. Hunter handles *River's Edge* with a sense of commitment and with few exploitative touches. At the worst moments, the film seems to follow its many plot strands too busily; at its best, which is most of the time, it composes a tapestry of postpuberty children, lost and liking it.

The chill, a chill that includes bafflement, is in that anomie, in the teenagers' dispensing with conscience as if to wreak revenge on the world—and on themselves for being in the world. The rift between generations is deepened by the parents' impotence. These are all familiar subjects, but they are jaggedly incisive here.

One girl decides to sleep with a boy who has just brought her to her front door at night. She goes into her house for two bedrolls to take to the park. As she walks down the hall, her mother calls out, "Clarissa, is that you?" She says yes, gets the bedding, and leaves. When she returns in the morning and walks down the hall with the bedrolls, her mother calls out again, "Clarissa, is that you?" Again she says yes.

It's so estranged, so acceptedly estranged, that it's frightening. We want to hope that it's not true. We want to stop the film and ask: "Clarissa, *is* that you?" □

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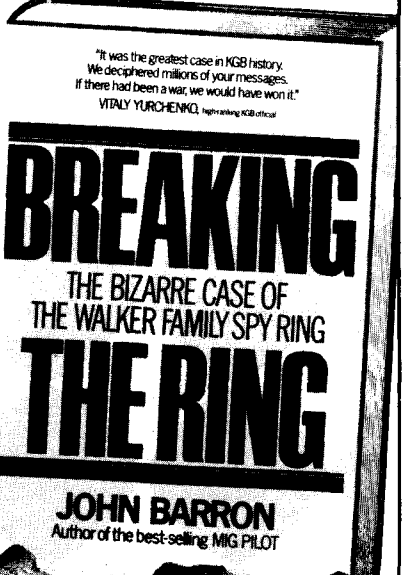
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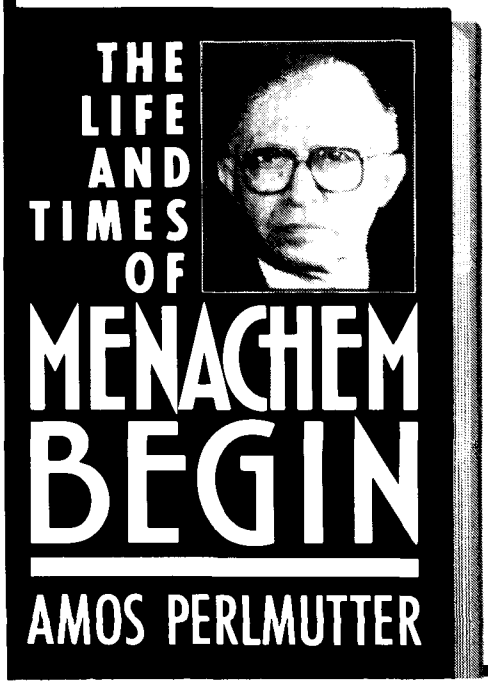

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DOUBLEDAY

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How the corporate mentality has undermined the profession of publishing.

THE LITERARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

BY TED SOLOTAROFF

AS AN EDITOR who works in trade publishing, I lead a dual life. I come from the world of letters, a vague but real place that has given me my standards and shaped my skills, and that keeps a record of my performance. On the other hand, for the past 20 years I have been reporting, as we say there, to the world of publishing, a specific but increasingly unreal place where I earn my living and produce my goods, and where a different kind of record is kept.

Though these two worlds have probably never lived on easy terms with each other, they have shared a certain common ground of desire and function: the pen yearning for the press that disseminated and rewarded its words, the press yearning for the fine pens that enabled it to move upward in society from a business to a profession, to publishing as an institution of culture.

There matters stood some 20 years ago, when I came to work at New American Library. Hardcover publishing was still largely a genteel profession. The "houses" were, like the homes of the gentry, distinctive, stable, guided by tradition or at least by precedent, inner-directed in their values. They characteristically bore the names of their founders—Norton, Knopf, Scribner, Harper Brothers, Farrar Straus, Simon and Schuster, and so on—and had developed along the lines of a kind of idealized self-image of the founders: of their vision, taste, and interests, and those of the successors who were chosen to maintain the reputation. Hence the identity of the house was remarkably stable for an organization so vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the times and the market.

The main reason for this stability was that the identity of the house was framed, and its profitability stabilized, by its backlist: by the well-established titles that more or less sold themselves from year to year. This endowment, as it were, enabled a publisher to refrain from the promiscuous pursuit of best-sellers. Moreover, profits were expected to be modest and variable. In hardcover publishing, the ratio of the cover price to the acquisition and production costs of a book was little better than 4-to-1; when the high overhead of a labor-intensive product and a 40 percent discount to the seller are added, one can see why a publisher who showed a net profit of eight percent a year judged himself to be doing well. The publisher and perhaps the few other officers derived incomes sufficient unto Fifth Avenue or Chappaqua; otherwise salaries were perhaps a bit better than at a university or some other non-profit organization.

Thus a publisher like Alfred Knopf, relying upon a franchise author like Khalil Gibran and an occasional bonanza like Camus's *The Stranger* (which he bought for $750), could develop a list of authors of international standing, ranging from England to Japan, from South America to Canada. Publishing for Knopf, a not untypical son of the risen Jewish merchant class, was a means of joining commerce and culture in a cosmopolitan way, just as he cultivated a refined lifestyle and an autocratic deportment. (He is supposed to have said that he did not care to publish any author whom he would not want to invite to dinner.) And one could point also to the younger leading hardcover houses—Viking, Simon and Schuster, Random House, Farrar Straus—as similar examples of Jewish newcomers using family money to establish houses that conformed to their desire to play an important cultural role in New York, much as their counterparts were doing in Vienna, Berlin, and London.

Even Simon and Schuster, which had something of the uninhibitedness of the Hollywood moguls about turning a buck, had its own touch of class, as well as a shrewd awareness that quality paid, which quickly made Pocket Books, its paperback subsidiary, pre-eminent in the ragtag field of reprints that existed before the Second World War. Viking and Random House, which began in the late 1920s, soon established themselves as leaders in literary and intellectual publishing by virtue of their aggressive pursuit of important writers (Random House brought the famous court action that enabled *Ulysses* to be published in America, and Viking published Joyce's other books) and their innovative marketing, which produced the Modern Library and the Viking Portables. Farrar Straus, which began after the Second World War, was another bright star in the publishing firmament; when I came to New York, in 1960, it had much the same aura as *Partisan Review* (and there was none brighter).

The older houses were typically more conservative in their behavior, less eclectic and more parochial in their interests. As a book and magazine publisher, Harper's served for many decades as an arbiter of mainstream American culture, particularly in its political and social concerns. By virtue of its magazine and its editors, culminating in Maxwell Perkins, Scribner's had been a force in American fiction ever since its great New York edition of Henry James. W. W. Norton was more or less the publisher of record in psychology and music; E. P. Dutton was known for its Americana and nature books; Houghton Mifflin, like Little, Brown and the Atlantic Monthly Press, maintained the Yankee Brahmin strain in American life and letters. Of course, these were all general publishers as well, whose lists for a given season might not seem readily distinguishable from one another. But the perceived tradition and character of each house was important in selecting editors and manuscripts, in determining priorities and taking risks, in packaging and marketing a book. A common attitude was that in a business as uncertain as trade publishing it paid to know who you were and what you did well.

A strong sense of identity and vocation was particularly apparent in two houses—New Directions and Grove Press. The scion of a steel fortune and a poet himself, James Laughlin was the best kind of patron, the kind who supports his authors by publishing them; he

Ted Solotaroff is a senior editor at Harper & Row, and the author of *A Few Good Voices in My Head*, to be published this fall by Bessie Books.

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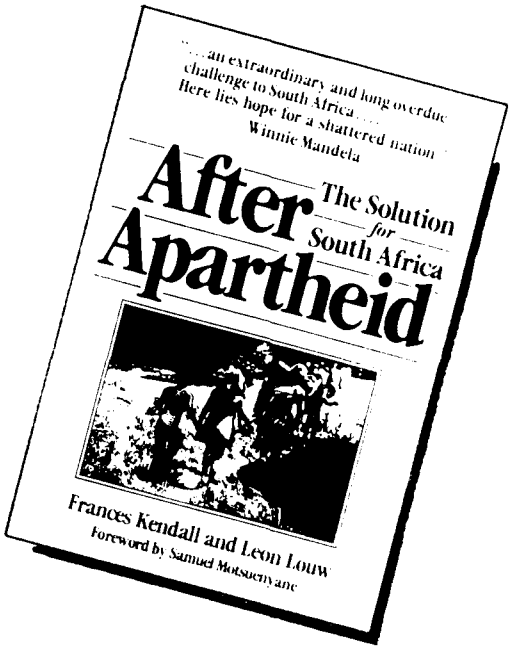
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devoted New Directions mainly to discovering and disseminating the canon of the modern tradition. Barney Rosset, a well-to-do Irish-Jewish American with a bohemian streak, made Grove and its magazine, *Evergreen Review*, into a forum for the international avant-garde of the 1950s and '60s. As iconoclastic as his authors, like Genet and Beckett, he went to court to appeal the Post Office's banning of his unexpurgated edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and subsequently defended his right to publish *Tropic of Cancer* and *Naked Lunch*. According to Kenneth C. Davis, a publishing historian, Rosset was "almost single-handedly responsible for the rewriting of censorship laws in this country." Pursuing his various interests in erotica, in profits, in modernism, in freedom of the press, in showmanship, Rosset was withal a bookman. When Grove's marketing manager asked Rosset why he was publishing a bilingual edition of Neruda's poetry "when I can't sell poetry, let alone bilingual poetry," Rosset replied, "Because it's important. We made a lot of money with this and that and we've got to give a little of it back to the business that made us the money."

ROSSET BELONGED more to the paperback side of publishing circa 1965 than to the hardcover one. That's where most of the crusaders and plungers were, much of the mission and the action, the classiness and the gaminess. "The paperback revolution" was still in full swing when I came to New American Library to start a literary-intellectual paperback magazine. NAL was going through some strange and, as it proved, prophetic times, but the vestigial spirit of its two founders, Kurt Enoch and Victor Weybright, was still there, though both had departed a few years before. The office I was given had just been vacated by David Segal, who had launched in the previous two years, as part of NAL's fledgling hardcover program, the novelists John Gardner, William H. Gass, and Cynthia Ozick. In the next office was Arabel Porter, the tutelary spirit of *New World Writing*, which had demonstrated a decade before that editing a big little magazine for the mass market was not necessarily an oxymoronic idea. Down the hall were the editors who worked on Signet Classics and Mentor Books, which had brought much of the best that had been thought and said into corner drugstores and transportation terminals. And there was the kindred spirit of Sylvan

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Barnet, who edited NAL's superb Shakespeare series.

NAL also made a big thing out of publishing Mickey Spillane and Ian Fleming, among other "down market" authors who largely supported the enterprise, but what surprised and instructed me was that this practice mattered much less than I would have thought. Coming, as I had, from *Commentary* and the New York intellectual scene, where the distinctions between high-, middle-, and lowbrow were rigorously and disdainfully preserved, I was struck at NAL by the degree to which the right hand of commerce and the left hand of culture knew, and even respected, what the other was doing. E. L. Doctorow, who had preceded me by a few years, likes to recall that he was responsible for signing up Ayn Rand and Ian Fleming, as well as for overseeing Signet Classics and NAL's science books. There was a kind of synergy at NAL, the hustle and the aspiration each pulling its oar.

This catholicity was also a part of the Enoch-Weybright legacy. Enoch, a refugee, had been a pioneer of paperback publishing in Europe. His Albatross Books, marketed for the English-reading audience of the Continent, had put Joyce and Lawrence and Virginia Woolf side by side with Ellery Queen and S. S. Van Dine. And this vision of a broad market for inexpensive books that were the best of their kind had lit up Weybright's mind. A farm boy from Maryland who had made his way through journalism to the Office of War Information in London, Weybright was a man whose status drives were matched only by his reading habits (he claimed to read 2,000 books a year). They founded NAL to go after the mass as well as the class market.

WHAT DROVE NAL was Enoch and Weybright's combined energy as very ambitious and cultivated men who demanded to be taken seriously—not as "reprinters," the somewhat derogatory term that the hardcover side used to mask its dependency on those who did cheap editions of its books, but as culturally important and valuable publishers, indeed as the new movers and shapers of the industry. Dealing in the rough-and-tumble (and still somewhat shady) world of the magazine distributors who handled most of their books no doubt gave Enoch and Weybright a motive to polish their image. So, too, did the congressional investigation in the mid-1950s of the allegedly violent and

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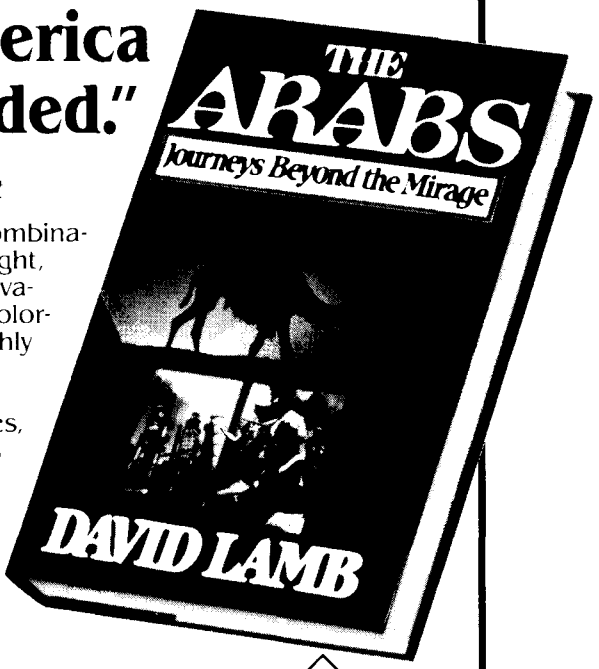

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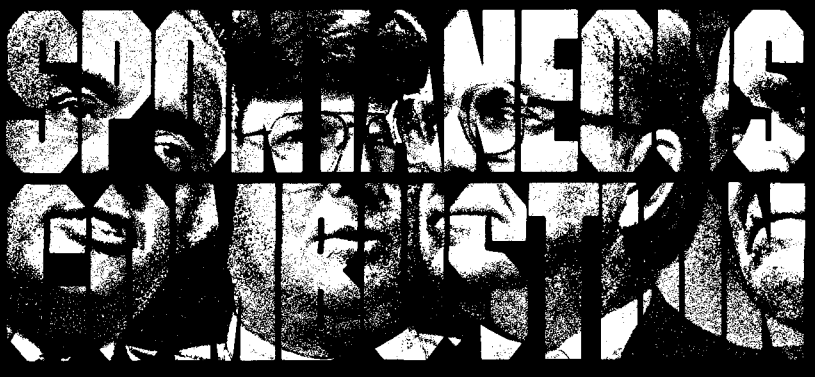

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licentious influence of paperbacks. But finally these two publishers built their house upon a sense of vocation: they would be cultural missionaries to the masses. "Good Reading for the Millions" was the motto they stamped on the cover of each of their books—Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* come true.

The conditions were right and ripe. There was the virtually continuous expansion of the economy after the Second World War; the dramatic spread of higher education due to the GI Bill; the federal subsidies that poured into the colleges and universities between Sputnik and the Great Society. These influences produced an educated middle class and a serious reading public that hardly existed before, as well as a huge campus market that was supplementing and increasingly replacing hardcover textbooks with paperbacks. Moreover, the nature of paperback distribution, in which the publisher set the quotas for the wholesalers, enabled a house like NAL to force its quality books into the market in the same "drop" with its Westerns, detective stories, and romances, and its reprints of last year's best-sellers. True, a lot of these books were returned unsold, but since mass-market books cost only a few cents a copy to produce (the ratio of cover price to production and distribution costs being more than double what it was in hardcover, and the royalty rates about half) one could afford to take risks.

Another advantage of paperback publishing at NAL was that its editorial group was small, versatile, quick on its feet, and trusted. Weybright, who in other ways put the "mega" back in megalomaniac, gave editors their heads. Doctorow tells a more or less typical story of jumping on the news of Adolph Eichmann's capture, calling up a knowledgeable journalist friend, and convincing him to write a quick book. A month after the event *The Case Against Adolf Eichmann* was in the racks, and went on to sell 500,000 copies. The success is less to the point than the venture itself. Good publishing at NAL was neither a crapshoot nor a market analysis: it was sensible risks in the pursuit of the interesting.

I came to NAL for precisely this pursuit, and when I began I had all the freedom and backing I could ask for. It would have been much the same if I had worked for Peter Mayer at Avon, or Oscar Dystel and Marc Jaffe at Bantam, as I did a few years later, or Ian Ballantine at his house. They were all astute rabbis of the paperback book, and fervent in its cause. Weybright himself summed up their careers:

> I had run the gauntlet and emerged with proof, widely acknowledged, that widespread cultivation of new and habitual readers of inexpensive books does not lead to vulgarization and the lowest common denominator of quality.... There was scarcely a notable author, contemporary or classical, who was not listed in the current volumes of paperback books in print.

II.

AS IT FELL out, Weybright's words were a valedictory not only of his achievement but of NAL's, and eventually of the revolution he had helped to lead. He and Enoch were already diminishing legends when I arrived at NAL, because seven years earlier they had sold their company to the Los Angeles Times Mirror, a junior-size conglomerate. They had both fallen for the allure of the big time, an allure that was to work its will on other independent publishers, to much the same outcome. It was to prove typical, too, that the accord that had prevailed in a privately owned company was displaced by rivalry and jockeying in a subsidiary one, that the golden

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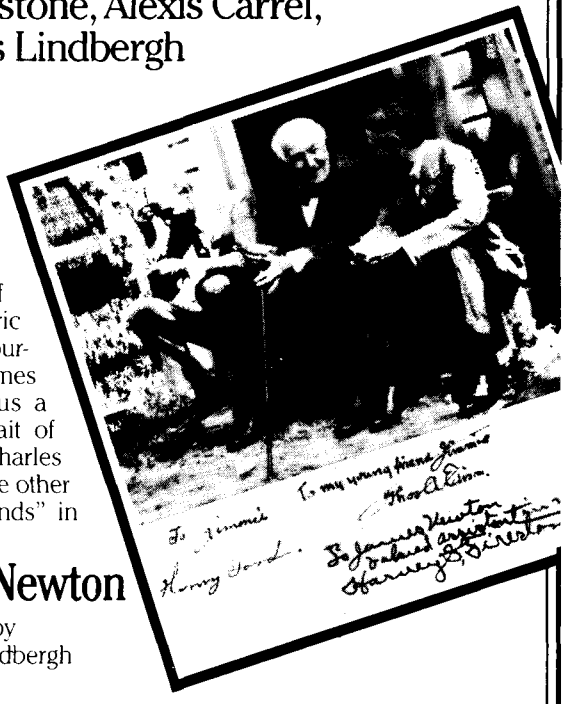

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apple of corporate acquisition would produce discord. It was also typical that the man from the business side would prove to be the more effective conglomerateer. As head of the Times Mirror's book division, Enoch went from apparent strength to strength, acquiring World, whose highly successful Bible and dictionary provided a solid foundation on which to build; Harry Abrams, the leading art-book publisher; and a small English house, which was to be Enoch's beachhead in the U.K.

Meanwhile Weybright steadily lost ground. He had little or no influence in Enoch's acquisitions. He found his autonomy vanishing in his own sphere, and had to take on the responsibility for World's new titles when its editors resigned en masse. The brief but disastrous history that followed, which led, only a decade later, to the fall of NAL from the top place in paperback publishing to the depths of the second rank, and to the virtual demise of World and New English Library, is sketched in gall in the chapter "From Dream to Nightmare" in Weybright's memoir, *The Making of a Publisher*. Its account of misconception, mistrust, mismanagement, and mediocrity forms a paradigm of the fate of many of the trade publishing houses that in the next two decades climbed the magic beanstalk of increased operating capital, shares of stock, and reassuring promises, only to end up in the land of the hungry giants.

The theme that runs through Weybright's account is the subversion of publishing planning and practice by the corporate mentality. Toward the end, Weybright recounts a meeting with the executive of the management consulting firm that was now overseeing the book program: " 'You are a purchasing—a procurement—executive,' Jack Vance said, 'and you *must* be responsive to marketing.' "

THIS, in a nutshell, became the story of much of trade publishing over the next 20 years. The main supporting characters are the conglomerates that bought publishing houses, the "procurement executives" who replaced the Weybrights (he resigned a month later, never to return to paperback publishing), the new bookstore chains, and the new breed of American book consumers. Together they have worked like a pincer movement to narrow the scope and prospects of literary and intellectual publishing in the book trade, to capture and

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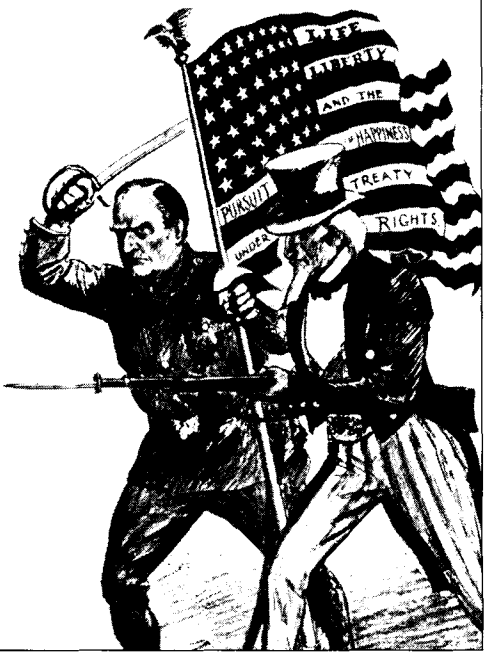

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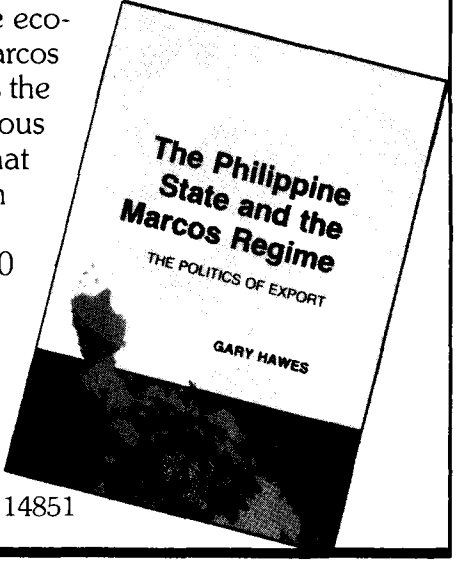

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exploit the new mass market of the age of consumerism and the culture of narcissism.

The typical publishing corporation or conglomerate subsidiary is only perfunctorily interested in providing "good reading for the millions." At the management level it works, thinks, and wills like any other big business. Its paramount concern is not the integrity of its product but the value of its shares, which is keyed to its short-term profits, derived from the number and the profitability of books it sells. The result has been to expand the volume of the product (from 1965 to 1985 the number of published titles increased by close to 25 percent in each decade) and to tailor the product to the demand. This is more pronounced in paperback publishing, where the invisible hand of the mass market is more coercive. But it has increasingly affected hardcover publishing as well, both as supplier to the reprinters and as a merchant looking for its piece of the action at the chain bookstore in the shopping mall.

THE ACTION is in the books that service popular needs for information, instruction, entertainment, and fantasy, or, indeed, consumerism itself: the yearning to buy that has turned the shopping mall into the church where so many families worship each weekend. This explains the overwhelming shift in most publishing houses to consumer-oriented titles: the proliferation of cookbooks and dieting books; physical, mental, and spiritual self-help books; fad and celebrity books; and books on all stages of the life cycle from infant care and child-rearing to retirement and estate planning. It also explains the corollary development in fiction, the domination by the masters of the categories—occult, romance, detective, spy, Western, horror, and so on.

The mass market of the shopping mall has proved to be the Great Leveler of the publishing business. The long-standing identities that derived from the houses' traditional interests and purposes have eroded, along with their backlists. With a few exceptions, the major houses today are virtually indistinguishable. (Here, as elsewhere in this essay, I exclude Harper & Row, my present employer, and Bessie Books, my publisher, from the discussion.) Like members of a football team in the huddle, the publishing players are distinguished from one another mainly by their size and numbers

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(that is, volume of sales). Authors, publishers, and editors move from one house to another without missing a beat. Why shouldn't they? The discourse they've left is the same they find: the subtle novel is a "tough sell"; the one that isn't immediately topical is "marginal"; the crudely written, heavily plotted one is a "great read"; the slick one, in which, typically, a gimmick meets a fad, is "popcorn." So, too, with non-fiction, in which the well-informed book is elbowed aside by the one that approaches its subject and its audience with outflung arms, the main idea on its author's mind being money. By attempting to standardize their product, the publishers have succeeded in standardizing themselves.

HOW DOES the corporate mentality infiltrate a publishing house? Let us begin with a not so hypothetical example. Telcom, a far-flung media empire of newspapers, magazines, and TV and radio stations, wants to own a New York publisher, for the prestige and the entrepreneurial possibilities. It looks into Harbinger House, a distinguished publisher of mostly quality books, which has been hit by high interest rates, soaring manufacturing and overhead costs, a flat book market, and the IRS's recent policy of taxing inventory, which has driven backlist publishing further to the wall and many important books out of print. Harbinger has been losing some authors, and failing to acquire others who belong on its list, because of the inflated advances offered by other houses for quality books "with commercial possibilities," which almost everyone occasionally wants to publish so they can look themselves in the face while laughing all the way to the bank. Moreover, Harbinger needs financing to capitalize on what it does well—particularly to expand its trade paperback line by acquiring undervalued titles from other publishers.

This looks good to the chief executive officer of Telcom. Wanting to impress the Harbinger people with his urbanity and himself with his high-mindedness, he assures them that the house's autonomy will be fully respected. For a time not much changes, except Harbinger's cash flow. Then Telcom buys Premium Books, a mass-market paperback house, to "mate" with Harbinger; they will now be able to compete with similarly positioned companies for the super best-sellers that seem to make all the difference. To coordinate his new companies, to place them more symmetrically on Telcom's organizational chart, and to "goose" their managements, the CEO sets up a new division and places it under the supervision of Howard Green, a Telcom executive who has no experience in publishing but was successful as the No. 2 man in Telcom's magazine division.

Green moves in with his team of financial and marketing analysts. They quickly discover that book publishing is a very irrational and uncertain business. For example, only 12 percent of Harbinger's list is responsible for 78 percent of its profits. But the main problem is what Harbinger doesn't publish. Breaking down its list and comparing its "major" titles (50,000 copies or more sold) with the *Publishers Weekly* hardcover and trade-paperback best-seller lists for the previous year show that Harbinger was weak in occult fiction (one title), suspense fiction (two), and romances (none). In non-fiction it was even worse: inspirational books (none), humor (one), pets (none), business and investment (none), and so on. In sum, the analysis not only explains why Harbinger is still showing a negative ROI (return on investment) after two years, but also confirms Green's belief that its management may have an incurable case of "egghead tunnel vision."

A similar analysis of Premium Books shows that it is cluttering up its inventory with books like *Doctor Zhivago*, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, and *The Last of the Just*. It should eliminate all titles that aren't moving at the rate of 1,000 copies a month, and should not acquire any for which this rate of sale cannot be anticipated. Premium, too, needs many more consumer-oriented titles—a line of "clean romances" like Harlequin, biographies of celebrities, more "blockbuster" novels (a million copies or more). Also, Telcom's ROI would be substantially improved if Premium would acquire and co-publish more of its major acquisitions with Harbinger. At the next Telcom board meeting it is agreed that although a Robert Ludlum, a Carl Sagan, or a Stephen King comes high, that's where the investment should be. Acquiring King, as well as doing him in both editions plus a movie tie-in, is a license to print money, almost as exciting as picking off an undervalued corporation.

But a year passes and Harbinger's ROI has barely improved. The publisher explains to Green that most of the new

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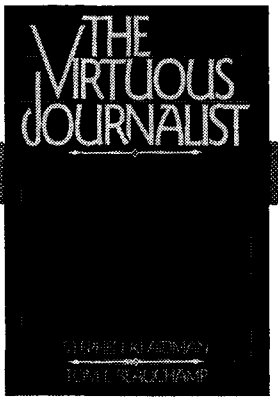

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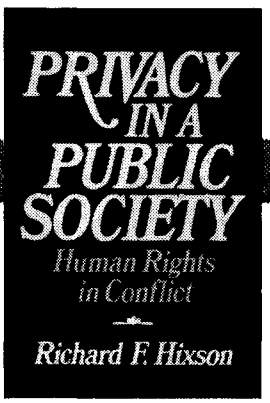

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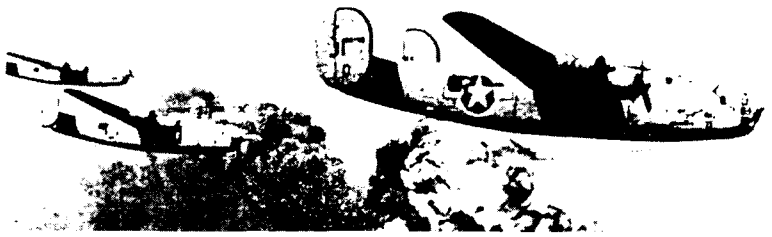

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high-priced authors he has acquired are still finishing their books, and that his expanded paperback line is running into heavy competition in the burgeoning field of trade paperbacks. Green needs more for the board meeting. He demands a major commercial acquisition before the meeting (for which Harbinger will badly overpay). All new acquisitions will henceforth be cleared with him; operating overhead for the next fiscal year will be cut by 15 percent; the quota of "major" titles will be doubled. After trying unsuccessfully to meet with Telcom's CEO, the publisher resigns. He is immediately replaced by an aggressive treasurer from another house with whom Telcom's "headhunter" agency has been negotiating. He brings his own editor in chief, from one of the big book clubs. And after a few months he convinces Green that Harbinger will be viable only if its entire operation is merged with Premium. Harbinger will maintain its editorial independence, though joint ventures will be more vigorously pursued.

Quickly a new Harbinger House begins to emerge. Poetry is cut back to a few authors who command substantial anthology fees. Literary criticism departs. History and biography become more popular and up-to-date. Fiction in particular comes under the new editor in chief's scrutiny. Does it have a page-turning plot, sympathetic characters, a punchy style, a topical subject, erotic steam? Is it, in short, a novel that he likes to read, and can sell to a reprinter for at least double its advance? Collections of stories are dubious unless the author has been consistently published in the *New Yorker*, and preferably in one or two of the women's magazines. Social and political criticism is similarly subjected to the standard of popular appeal: Is its author likely to be invited to the Phil Donahue show? So with psychology, biology, religion. "Don't tell me how good it is. Tell me who's going to buy it."

All of which has an effect on even the most independent, venturesome, quality-minded editor. He finds that his value to the house has been quantified: his salary and overhead are now expected to produce X times their total in the net sales of the books he acquires. The pressure affects the way he reads, judges, and even edits manuscripts. His attention and evaluation begin to shift from the characteristics that make a book unique to those that make it readily identifiable ("the new anti-yuppie novel"), from

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those that make it risky and interesting to those that make it promotable ("a cross between Jay McInerny and Scott Fitzgerald"). If the former characteristics significantly outweigh the latter, which is generally the case with original or otherwise difficult work, he becomes less and less willing or able to take the book on. In the new marketing environment of Harbinger, he feels that his judgment is always on the line, that to prevail with the moderately unusual manuscript he must forget about doing the esoteric and the demanding one, even though he knows in his heart, if he has a heart left, that the author could be the next Italo Calvino or Susan Sontag or John Berger.

Fortunately even bottom-line publishing doesn't lend itself all that readily to the kind of controls that corporate minds like to employ to tailor the book to the market. The reading tastes of the serious book-buying public are still too idiosyncratic and unpredictable for a computer to track. That is one reason why the beleaguered, compromising editor at Harbinger House remains haunted by the spirit of art and ideas. He knows that the literary or intellectual work that strikes it rich can strike it very rich indeed, and for years to come. First novels generally lose money, but how would you like to have passed up *The Bell Jar* or *The Catcher in the Rye* or *Catch-22* or *The Naked and the Dead* or *Invisible Man*? A writer whose first three or four novels didn't sell is hard to justify to the sales force and the bookstore buyer, but how would you like to have turned down *The World According to Garp* or *The Golden Notebook* or *The French Lieutenant's Woman*? So the literary editor tries to persuade his new publisher and editorial director to keep a margin of imagination and seed money available for at least a few unlikely submissions like *The Lover* and *The Name of the Rose*.

Still, the new pressures at Harbinger continue to push the editor in the direction of the "major" titles. Since the authors of such books are already being well published and cherished elsewhere, he finds himself in the new role of raider and seducer for Harbinger. Apart from its effect on his morale, such behavior tends to curtail his independence and compromise his editorial role and skills. Besides more money, he doesn't have much to offer the best-selling author except his flattery and Harbinger's prestige. But if he enters on his knees, how is he to stand on his own two feet later and edit this author? If he has reservations about his glibness, which he wasn't about to mention during the courtship, how is he to establish the ground to criticize it? He can't do much accommodating and falsifying and groveling without losing respect for his own judgment, which is what he mainly edits with. And so less serious editing will be done at Harbinger.

LET US ASSUME that the editor at the new Harbinger still has some margin in which to persist, and some will to do so. He acquires, say, a remarkable collection of coarse, enigmatic, but cumulatively powerful stories about low life in Glasgow. He does everything right for this exciting and important literary discovery, only to encounter in the marketplace an even more onerous version of the books-as-product mentality. First, the bookstore chains, which now control 30 percent of the market and counting, and powerfully influence the rest of it. An article in *Publishers Weekly* a few years ago described the outlook at Waldenbooks, which now operates a thousand stores:

> All of its top executives strongly support the mass merchandising concepts (that is, of treating books like a product in the same way a manufacturer would merchandise a bar of soap). Hoffman [the president], who views romance titles with as much respect as literary works, experienced the selling power of mass merchandising techniques when he was an executive at Bell and Howell.

More recently, in the *New York Times Magazine*, Harry Hoffman amplified his view of the book market. One of his more telling points was that "time is a factor. People want something short that they can read in a night."

One can easily imagine the response that Harbinger's salesperson will receive when he presents our editor's unique book about some lost souls in Glasgow in their own idiom, a book for which the editor has fought to get an advance quota of 5,000 copies but no advertising budget. Even if the salesperson shares the editor's enthusiasm for the book, buyers at Waldenbooks and at B. Dalton, the other major "full-line" chain, will order no more than a few copies for 15 percent of their stores.

Let's assume that this "slow read" and "tough sell" receives critical acclaim. A rate of sale deemed acceptable for it has already been plugged into a central computer. If the book doesn't meet it in 90

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days, it won't be in most of the stores when its reputation catches up with it. When the author's next book comes along, assuming the editor still has the credibility and heart to take it on, 30, or perhaps by then 35, percent of the market will be closed to it. An even more ominous phenomenon is the advent of the discount bookstore chains, which narrow the market even further by restricting their inventories to the quick and the dead: to best-selling types and remainders.

THE TROUBLE with both these chains is not that they exist: nobody in publishing is opposed to bringing more people into bookstores. It is that by expanding omnivorously they make it difficult for many independent booksellers to survive, particularly in communities where serious readers are not legion. It's not only that the full-line chains have taken to discounting some of the best-sellers to pull in customers, but also that because they buy books on a chainwide basis they get discounts six percent to eight percent higher from the publisher, even though it pays the same freight costs to send five copies of a book to B. Dalton in San Jose as it does to supply the independent there. More important, their purchasing capacity enables them to receive many times more money for co-op advertising and promotion from the publisher. They kill off competition and distort the business by driving the larger independent stores to adopt their methods.

One of the ways the outpriced and outgunned independent bookstore has fought back is by countering the impersonal, supermarket service of the chain store with increased attention to its clientele, with programs of readings, discussions, and other events that enable the store to serve as a center of the local literary community. This has worked well in places with high concentrations of serious readers, like Minneapolis and Berkeley; but it's hard to put across in Saratoga Springs or Tucson without some significant help from the publishers. The endangered state of the local bookstore is particularly a problem for quality publishing, because the store provides the advice, information, and service to readers that gives the original collection of Glasgow stories a better chance. And as independent bookstores vanish, like sentinels whose positions have been overrun, and the chain merchandisers move in with their store traffic control and target marketing plans, the reverberations are registered back in New York, where amid talk of cutbacks here and new lines there the transformation of publishing from partly a profession to wholly a business broadens and accelerates.

In recent years the diversified conglomerates such as Telcom have for the most part departed from the business of book publishing. But their impact is still to be felt in the many houses that they badly destabilized and the several that they killed (notably Fawcett, a major paperback publisher) by their demands for unrealistic and quick returns on the money they poured into them; by their arrogant or ignorant meddling in publishing judgments and practices; and by their firing, demoting, and undercutting of sound bookmen and bookwomen as they brought in their conglomerateers or empowered those within who rushed into their embrace. The conglomerateer has bred an atmosphere of fear, cynicism, rapaciousness, and ignorance that has been as destructive to serious publishing as any of the other developments I've described. Its cost can be reckoned in the number of sagacious and dedicated publishers, editors, and marketing executives who, like Victor Weybright, were driven out or demoralized or corrupted.

THE CONGLOMERATES' ravage of the publishing industry was compounded by the stagflation of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The paperback houses fared particularly badly, and their cutbacks severely reduced the subsidiary income many hardcover houses needed to make ends meet. The books that were most adversely affected were the so-called "mid-list" ones, which included most of the quality titles by authors who did not have major sales, who were not "brand names." But the older management, interested in preserving publishing as an institution of culture, tended to be replaced and its natural heirs superseded by a new managerial class that fell in smoothly with the book-chain executives and buyers and store managers, for all of whom publishing was profits and losses and books were "product."

In this climate, during the late 1970s, of inflated advances, reprint sales, and a declining interest in most literary and intellectual titles, some important publishers and editors who had been committed to quality were, sadly, more or less overcome by the mass marketeer in them-

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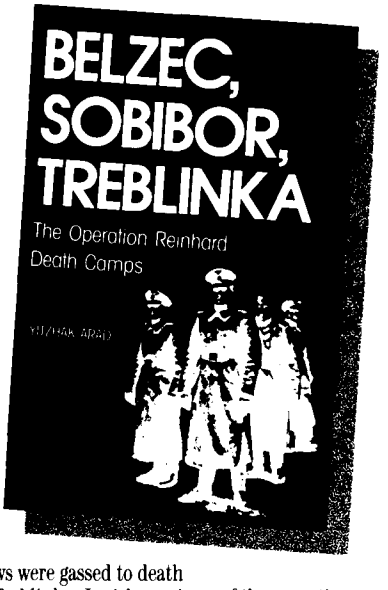

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selves. And the intense competition for established or even potential "market leaders" that Thomas Whiteside described in *The Blockbuster Phenomenon* gave a new scope and impact to the wheeler-dealer literary agent and lawyer. They plugged the high voltage of Hollywood into the delicate circuitry of established author-publisher relationships, shorting out a good many of them and creating overloads of publishers' advances and authors' expectations from which both groups are still recovering.

In the latest round of mergers and acquisitions, the publishers who have adapted most successfully to supplying the demands of consumerism have been using their surplus capital to take over those that have not adapted as well, rationalizing and strengthening the tendencies I have been describing. Watch what happens to Doubleday now that it has been bought by the multinational firm of Bertlesman, which has presided over the transformation of Bantam from the brilliantly balanced purveyor of commerce and culture that I worked for in the 1970s to a mega-merchandiser of both hardcover and paperback products, most of whose huge monthly order form reads like a tour through a shopping mall bookstore (though Bantam's spirit may be reviving in its new imprint for publishing new writers).

III.

ONE CAN SAY, of course, that it's a free country; that the big publishers and booksellers are giving consumers the books they want; that there is no reason why books should be spared from the economic, social, and cultural forces that continue to massify all the other media; that relative to the products of the radio and television networks, the film industry, and the newspaper and magazine chains, there is still much quality of thought and art in book publishing. One can talk about the twilight of the print era, the culture of narcissism, the rock-bottom state of the zeitgeist during the past decade. One can say all this . . . and also believe that there is more to be said.

I think that in viewing the big time as its proper place in society, much of the publishing business has sold itself a bill of goods. It has largely sold out its cultural purpose to its commercial one, thereby losing the vision and the energy and the realism that guided and empowered publishers like Knopf, Cerf,

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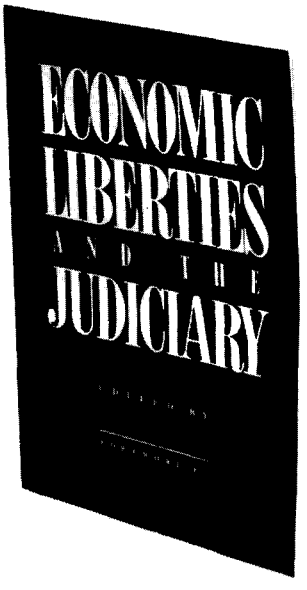

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Klopfer, Harold Guinzberg, Cass Canfield, Kurt Wolff, Ballantine, Enoch, Weybright, and others. The truth is that the basic economics of the trade book have not changed since the days of aggressive cultural ambition and modest economic expectation. If anything, the spread between costs and receivables has contracted, because of the chain stores' higher discounts and promotion charges. It's true that publishers have been able to put out many more of the mass merchandise titles for which the chains have expanded the market, but they are also taking book returns that are three and four times what they used to be. Even by corporate standards profit margins remain slim and capricious.

Yet because they are corporations, the bigger houses have big-time overheads: six-figure salaries for the officers, substantial fees to the directors, skyscraper rents for office space and executive apartments in the city, limousine service, and the other perks of the boardroom. It's no wonder, then, that there has been the frantic pressure for blockbuster books by name-brand authors and by celebrities, the competition for which leads to bloated advances, bloated promotion costs and services, and bloated risk.

When a blockbuster or two fail, the effect on the rest of the list can be grievous indeed. Quality books are the most badly affected, for they lose the pittance of advertising money that their authors count on to develop a reputation that may sustain their careers. Moreover, the attitude toward acquisitions hardens against the gifted, serious, inexpensive submission, but grows starry-eyed about the big commercial property that can be published quickly. As the CEO and his number-crunchers exert themselves, publishing decisions become more reckless and shortsighted. During the past couple of years, the lords of the market share, the counselors of the quick fix, the believers in the divine rights of the ROI have been laying waste lists and careers in trade publishing in an even more relentless and benighted way.

WHAT CAN be done, meanwhile, to keep the profession of publishing alive as an institution of culture? Obviously, the giant houses aren't going to take themselves off the Big Board or become small again. But it's not too much to ask that their CEOs and other top executives mull over some serious questions. Given the narrow profit margins of trade publishing, is it sound business to saddle it with the inflated salaries that corporate officers receive? They are four to five times those of senior editors and marketing people, who are willing to work in publishing for less money than they would earn in a more profitable business. (Not to mention the junior staff, who barely subsist on their salaries.) Why should officers not accept the same facts of economic life?

Does a publishing house really need the towering midtown location that pushes its overhead further through the roof? Are the new breed of executives in the right to flood the market with non-books that may or may not increase their market share, but surely drive out genuine books and degrade the business? Does sound publishing follow from the pressure to increase short-term profits and return on investment levels that belong to a more profitable and stable business? The truth is that the opulent corporate style reinforces the expansionist corporate mentality, institutionalizing the motive energy of greed and envy.

Envy and greed lead one to think big. Respect and care lead one to think small. Thinking small pays attention, in Paul Goodman's words, to "the object, the function, the program, the task, the need," while thinking big pays "immense attention to the role, procedure, prestige, and profit." What would thinking small, or at least smaller, be like? It would wonder if this cookbook is really useful, or just another packageable and promotable piece of merchandise. It would ask whether you would give this book of pop psychology or spirituality to a troubled friend. Thinking smaller would mean inquiring whether the house is acquiring and scheduling more books than it can publish well—does it habitually disrupt its publishing program and undermine professional standards by rushing out books in the fourth fiscal quarter to inflate its annual volume and profit figures?

Thinking smaller also concerns the climate of the editorial group. Does it foster independent judgment, cooperation, initiative, painstakingness, and pride? Or power roles, committee decisions, crass opportunism, pressure, rivalry, fear, and the depreciation of editorial skills? Are editors encouraged to be the allies or the exploiters of their authors? Is the house promoting big books unduly and small ones hardly at all? Are the salespeople able to sell its list, as well as

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those of the other publishers they represent, effectively? Does 20 percent of its list (the figure publishers use to justify doing the other 80 percent) really make a significant contribution to genuine culture and public enlightenment? Thinking smaller, in short, puts one in touch with the values that probably led one to come into publishing in the first place, with the values that were found in the good publishing houses 20 years ago.

By the same token, if you are a CEO, or an officer, or an editorial or marketing executive, and these values mean little or nothing to you, why do you persist in such a low-margin and capricious business? Is it to bask in the prestige of publishing even as you undermine the values and practice that created it? In asking the corporate publishing executive to think smaller and more seriously about purposes and methods, I am trying not to turn the clock back, but to take account of the facts as they now stand. I am pleading with him, or her, not only to moderate this heedless momentum in the direction of mediocrity and unreality, but also to make better use of the capital and other resources that are available.

AFTER ALL, a big house can spend more to promote a worthy book and author than a small one can. Why doesn't it do so as a matter of course? It costs about $1,500 to put a young or little-known author whose book has received compelling reviews on the literary map by advertising it in a leading journal of opinion. The same amount will buy full-page ads in four leading little magazines that further position an author in the world of letters. When you realize that this very modest budget is about three percent to five percent of the budget for the big commercial book by the name-brand writer, which will soon be shouting for attention all by itself in bookstore windows across America, you can see why the hearts of editors sink in dismay and frustration.

The big ad budget has much less to do with selling the book than with impressing the buyer for the chain and appeasing the vanity of the author. Would five percent less make any real difference to either of them? It can make all the difference to the author who needs the recognition if he is to have a livelihood and career. You don't even have to go back to the good publisher's formula of budgeting ten percent of anticipated net income to advertising and promotion; half

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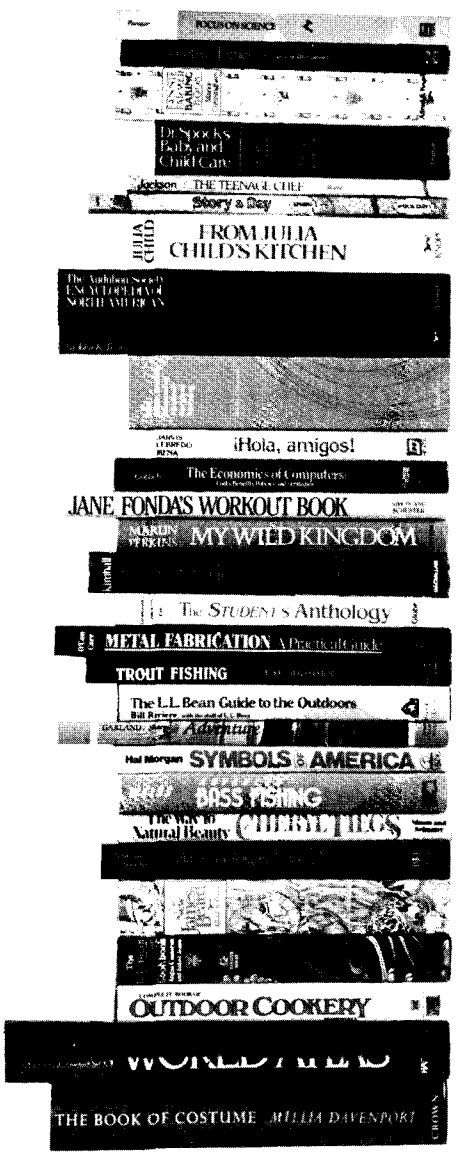
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of that would provide enough for the collection of poetry that you expect will sell 4,000 copies in hardcover and paper, or the novel or other prose work that you expect will sell 5,000 copies.

The big publishing house can afford to innovate. Less than one percent of a typical annual ad budget would pay the salary of a young publicist assigned to put his or her literary passion to work in developing a program of readings, panels, book signings, and so forth for quality authors. Such events would bring the authors and their audiences together in bookstores, on the campus reading circuit, and on college and listener-supported radio stations. Poets have been selling most of the copies of their collections this way for the past 15 years. Why not give them a hand in arranging readings and other appearances, and do the same for serious fiction and non-fiction writers as well? Co-op advertising money that was allocated more widely and flexibly would help too. A little seed money (little in corporate terms) would go a long way, as would a slight reallocation of priorities. It's shameful for an editor at a big house to tell an author over a $60 lunch that there's no budget to advertise his book. Give editors the free use of every dollar they save from their entertainment budgets, matched by one from the house, to promote their first novels and other budgetless books and see what happens.

I ONCE HAD an argument with an editorial director who believed that the most exciting kind of publishing was to spot a writer you wanted to publish, wait while another house did the first three or four books, and move in for the killing. I made a list of authors who were still with the house or the editor or both that had taken on their early work. It included John Hersey, James Baldwin, Robert Lowell, Alan Ginsberg, Susan Sontag, Robert Penn Warren, Reynolds Price, J. D. Salinger, Samuel Beckett, Thomas Pynchon, Truman Capote, Flannery O'Conner, John Updike, John Steinbeck. I remember stopping at 30 or so. It doesn't take much to make most quality authors feel that they are appreciated and supported; such treatment is what good writers mean by a good house, and if they receive it, they're likely to remain loyal. All the rest is money and flattery and the aura of the big time. When these become the terms of appeal, the author loyalty over which publishers have been wringing their (slippery) hands collapses. Freedom, trust, and a voice in marketing decisions create the working conditions good editors need. When these depart, so do they.

The new unreality of publishing is reflected, too, in the way the business has come to honor its achievements. Until ten years ago, the National Book Awards were prizes of $1,000, given to the most distinguished work in each of six or seven major areas—fiction, poetry, science writing, current affairs, biography, history, and translation—as determined by a jury of three eminent figures in that area. The ceremony was generally held at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center, and most of the professional personnel of publishing turned out, to listen to a speech by a public figure that was usually respectable and to the remarks of the winners, which were often eloquent. All in all, it was an appropriate and even an inspiriting occasion. Then the big-timers moved in, notably the mass marketeers from the paperback industry and from one of the bookstore chains. Their idea was to make the National Book Awards just like the Academy Awards. So there came into being hosts of prizes for reprints (as well as original books), for jacket illustrations, book designs, and what-have-you, as chosen by jurors from all walks of the book trade and market; the event turned black-tie and was attended mostly by executives.

This circus was supposed to capture public attention, sell lots of books, and make the entire business proud of itself. When, within a few years, it collapsed of its own inanity, the sponsoring organization, the Association of American Publishers, cast about for alternatives. Soon only three prizes were awarded: for fiction, non-fiction, and, to show that everyone's heart was still in the right place, the first novel. Last year the awards for distinction were raised to $10,000 and reduced to two—fiction and non-fiction, with consolation prizes of $1,000 for the "short list" contenders. The celebration was held at the Starlight Room of the Waldorf-Astoria, and was financed by selling tables for $750 a crack. (The AAP sensibly decided to stop sponsoring the event.) This year the prizes will be even larger to attract more attention, which they won't. Thus the industry has turned its back on the ritual event that appropriately honored it, and instead has taken to making a pass at the Muses by flashing its money and glitz. It was predictable that the mood of the authors at

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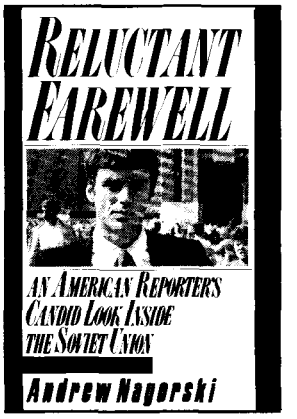

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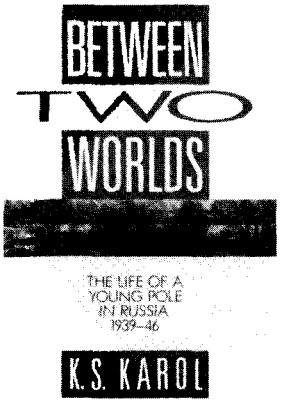

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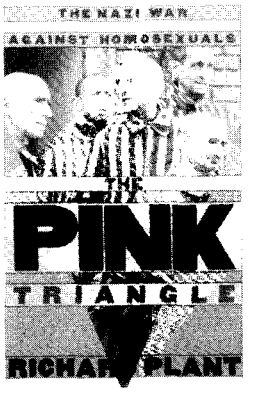

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the Starlight Room last year would be one of opposition (Peter Taylor) or self-irony (E. L. Doctorow); they realized that the real tribute that the publishing business was paying that evening was to its own hypocrisy. The Association of American Publishers should take back the National Book Awards and return them to their original format, as a competition and an event that enables it to remember its other mission.

And there's more to do if the AAP wishes to publicize serious books properly. American educational television has never had the type of serious book program that is taken for granted in England and France. The AAP should set to work to sponsor a really interesting program for PBS television, which can be rebroadcast on National Public Radio. It should have a lively, articulate bookperson as moderator, who can lead a spirited and informed discussion of a current provocative book. Such a program would accomplish the wide literary enlightenment of the reading public. It would show that the hand of commerce and the hand of culture can work together again. The trouble with having, say, Stephen King reading Dickens in a B. Dalton store (an idea that recently came out of a meeting of publishers and writers on the crisis in marketing serious books) is that, like the American Book Awards, it makes the book business more unreal. It integrates imagination and intellect not with their public, but with their nemesis: with hype.

I HAVE BEEN painting a bleak picture of the book business, because this bleakness is dominant and spreading. Of course many good books continue to be published in New York and Boston; some of them are marketed well despite the weak or negligible performance of the chain bookstores in their third of the market. Of course those editors who care about ideas and culture continue to find ways to function in the space where the margin of a publisher's risk meets the margin of a publisher's pride. And of course there are still publishers and editors (Robert Giroux, for example) who, whether they work in a big house or a small one, remain "the lords and owners of their faces." As models of high conduct, they enable the publishing business to honor its claim to being a profession.

Arthur Samuelson, one of the more astute younger editors, speaks of the benefits of learning the business at a small house, where the editor is close to the various phases of the publishing process, takes on diverse books, and is often left on his own to improvise. In big-time publishing, the editor tends to be more uncounseled by himself and others, to rely upon signals from the best-seller lists and the in-house authorities to counter a chronic low-grade panic. This is one reason why many younger editors today know a great deal about market trends and promotional ploys, but are either glibly or poignantly at a loss when asked about their ideas for interesting books.

Samuelson makes the further point that the big-time house doesn't seem to have a memory, which limits its intelligence and distorts its will. In a small house, by contrast, all sorts of know-how are retained and used, and memory is its guiding light. With its limited cash flow and credit, the house can't afford to forget either its mistakes or its right moves, and so they (rather than the round-robin derring-do of the agents' auctions and the elastic projections of sales and subsidiary income that the "heavy hitters" use in competing for a book) naturally become part of its mentality. Like a stable person, a good small

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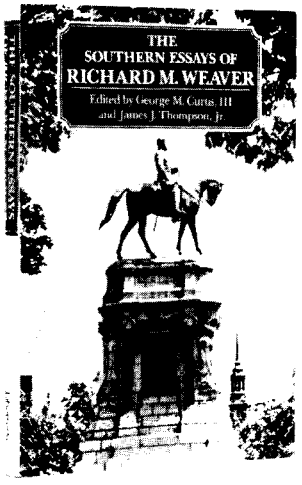

THE SOUTHERN ESSAYS OF RICHARD M. WEAVER

Foreword by George Core
Edited with Preface by George M. Curtis, III and James J. Thompson, Jr.

Richard M. Weaver (1910-1963) was one of the leading figures in the post World War II development of an intellectual, self-conscious conservatism, and his most important and widely cited book, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago, 1948), is still in print.

Weaver's appreciation of liberty was rooted in his understanding of Southern history. This collection of fourteen of Weaver's essays on the South and Southern history is presented in demonstration of George Core's point that "few critics of the South rival Richard Weaver in comprehensiveness of vision and depth of thought. . . ."

Among the essays included are "Lee the Philosopher" (1948), "Agrarianism in Exile" (1950), "The Tennessee Agrarians" (1952), "The South and the American Union" (1957), and "Two Types of Individualism" (1963).

George M. Curtis, III is Professor of History at Hanover College and James J. Thompson, Jr., is Book Review Editor of *The New Oxford Review*.

266 + xxii pages. Foreword, preface, acknowledgments, index.

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house respects its experience.

Under Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer, Random House solved this problem brilliantly, by making its senior editors in effect publishers of their own books. Such a policy is virtually unthinkable in a comparable house today—with the exception of the handful of editors who have been given their own imprints. These editor-publishers (Helen Wolff, Seymour Lawrence, Elisabeth Sifton, James Silberman, the late Henry Robbins, and others) have been responsible for a disproportionate share of the distinguished books in the past 20 years of trade publishing. Like the small family farm and the small serious bookstore, imprint publishing is where the memory, the will, and the intelligence of a cultivating type of work can be found.

And there is, thank God, the alternative press. Much of the party of letters—particularly its experimental and traditional wings—has been moving to the campus. The literary and intellectual culture is finding in the university presses a home away from home. The campus-based publishers have been widely occupying territory that the trade houses have retreated from, in the arts and sciences, or all but abandoned, in foreign literature and thought. The small-press movement continues to lead its dispersed, precarious, seminal life. Like surprise witnesses at a trial, shrewd and reasonably well-funded presses such as North Point, Ardis, and David R. Godine testify that the future of independent trade publishing may well lie in regional centers like Berkeley and Ann Arbor, Atlanta and Cambridge. May all the publishers and editors of the alternative press, like their dwindling brethren in New York and Boston, continue to think small and ambitiously, to believe that a good book is an opportunity rather than a problem, to welcome the fine pens that need and confirm their work.

A Regular Joe

Once More Around the Block
by Joseph Epstein

(Norton, 308 pp., $16.95)

If only the author liked himself a good deal less, these essays would be likable enough. But he won't wait for your approval, and gives it himself by proxy: "Among the assets I tote up as my own: a wife I adore, work that keeps me perpetually interested, good friends, good health, and (thus far along) supreme good luck." That, in an essay on why he likes where he lives. In another, on secondhand books, he finds a moment to recall: "I like what I do at present." (Don't expect him to open a secondhand-book shop.) "Not," he adds in an essay on superior athletes, "that I am displeased with being what I am—a man, that is, marked by the possession of general culture."

Now and then his assurance falters a bit: "In middle age, I remain an intellectual groupie." So he still goes to lectures by world-class eminences, just to catch the action; but he knows some of them personally, and tells you what they said at parties. When he's doing what he does and not just saying how much he likes it (that takes time, though), Epstein turns out to be what *Harper's* used to call an "easy-chair" essayist. He has a taste for the older, less easy essayists, as he demonstrates sometimes by writing about them, more often by imitating or stealing their effects. "Vulgarity is the garlic in the salad of charm": Cyril Connolly. "Flattery is the pit in the plum of praise": Joseph Epstein.

"Imagine," he invites us, in an essay composed of a mildly expurgated selection from his journals—"Imagine, then, my journal entries about people whom [sic] I feel are my enemies. Vengeance, the Italians say, is a dish best served cold. My plan is to serve mine posthumously." Lest you suspect him of getting above himself, he instantly confides that "my only hope [for posthumous publication] is that standards continue to fall at the same splendidly alarming rate as they have been for some years now." In another writer this would pass as self-irony. In Epstein, it goes with an inveterate distrust of himself and others—the

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private accompaniment of his public self-esteem.

Still, all his more pronounced traits are glossed over by a habitual and relaxed pomposity. "One of the few things I have ever disagreed with Henry James about is . . . ." "Was it in A. J. P. Taylor's autobiography that I read . . . ?" This, again, is the easy-chair style. Hazlitt, Lamb, Shaw, Chesterton, and the other essay writers whom Epstein alternately lauds and ventriloquizes were capable of nodding off into prefatory disclaimers like these. But they told you not only *that* they had read certain books, but something interesting about the books. Epstein has done intelligent work as a reviewer; but the freedom of these essays (all but one written for his own magazine, the *American Scholar*) has made him wearingly sententious. These days, when he wants to show himself thinking about books, he has to fortify his prose with solemn banalities. "[Conrad's] heroes are among the loneliest figures in literature and among the most moving in part because of their solitariness, which gives them their tragic dimension." That, if you like, is the depressive Epstein; the manic comes out in a passing shot like "See you later obfuscator."

Both of the above sentences are wide of the norm in this book. Still, Epstein writes about style so constantly, with so ponderous an air of staking his claim, that his essays seem one long entreaty for a judgment of his own worth as a stylist. The truth is, he writes well enough to be read, sometimes, with pleasure, for paragraphs at a stretch, but not well enough to set up as an authority on writing. "She is too intent," he remarks of Anaïs Nin, "on 'the quest for the self,' as she more than once puts it, but after a page or two [of her diaries] I invariably find myself giving her quest a rest." There he is, neatly cutting up a piece of California-sounding jargon; yet the jingle of "quest-rest," which ends his own sentence, is the sort of optional humor that a surer writer would avoid.

Even in his best conscious effects, Epstein is a gagman—in this resembling at least one talented writer he loathes, Philip Roth. His most appealing stuff calls for a broad delivery; as in the following passage, which begins with an extract from his journals:

> "Five years ago I found much about life absurd; nowadays I find many of the same things merely sad. It would be good to be able to regress a little in this sphere." As a Borscht Belt comedian might say, "Hey, c'mon folks, these are the jokes—yuk it up!" The comedian's name in this case might be young Jackie Werther.

Here I think he spoils the joke, as he commonly does, by verbiage at the end. Even when he gets the punch line right, he has an unsettling habit of explaining it away. He never, he says, read *Lord of the Rings*, *Lord of the Flies*, or quite all of *Lord Jim*. "Is there a pattern emerging?" Then he gives a separate sentence on how he seems to dislike books that have the word "Lord" in the title.

When not on stilts, Epstein ambles along at a folksy-chumsy pace (the model, now, being closer to Thurber). This game, too, he gives away by a certain acquired coarseness, a scholastic vulgarity. To carry it off, at any rate, you need very fine tuning; but under Epstein's touch the sober, slow, Midwestern style becomes a placeless and timeless patois, in which people "allow as how" they'd like to do something, in which boys are "lads" and girls are "lasses," and in which the author can say "If I had my druthers." These, once more, are anomalies, but "for the vast most part" is not. The extra word is a tedious embroidery of a necessary commonplace. It says, in effect, "Writer was here." But language is more impervious than that: it cares for the traces a writer has left, not for how hard he tried to leave them.

Much of Epstein's writing, in matters of argument no less than style, is similarly occupied with the pedantry of small differences. Consider the book's opening essay, "Work and Its Contents." It starts off by taking issue with Michael Walzer's proposal that degrading work be equally shared. By referring to Walzer as "a social theorist of sorts," Epstein implies, cunningly, that there are only theorists *of sorts*, whereas he himself is a practical fellow. But the argument that ensues is pointless. It says that work is lucky if it's pleasant, unlucky if it's not, and anyway a part of life we're better off with than without. Epstein believes that work is more vital to our nature than play, and he invokes Carlyle to that effect. Carlyle, however, took this view a long way; for him, the cotton picking of Negro slaves counted as work, and he defended it accordingly. Though Epstein has crotchets, he shows no sign yet of going this far. The essay, in fact, seems to have begun, and should have been kept, simply as a homage to his father, who used to tell him every morning to get cracking.

THE FOREGOING is a typical plot for an Epstein essay. The typical contents are: anecdotes, quotations, names (casually lifted or impressively dropped). He shares with a few good essayists and a great many bad ones the ambition of using an apparently shapeless mass of materials to suggest a bold and inquisitive temperament. Yet his subject matter is limited. Almost all these essays, as will have been plain already, are about two things: books and success. Let me put it more dramatically. Two demons, Culture and Chicago, haunt Joseph Epstein's imaginings. They are fighting for possession of his soul (sort of); and the essays are a dialogue between them. Or rather, a monologue with an auditor who holds veto power over every utterance. Culture wrote the essays. Chicago's job is to remind the author that books aren't money. This news usually hits Epstein awfully hard. To recover, and in an effort to placate both of the contesting parties, he summons all the extrinsic facts about himself that might prejudice both in his favor. For example: that businessmen admire his prose; and that a friend once called him "the Sammy Davis Jr. of American letters."

Of the 16 essays in this book, I enjoyed reading three: one about eating too much, one about being "a former good guy," and one called "My Friend Mar-

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The old dog used to herd me through the street
As if the leash were for my benefit,
And when our walk was over he would sit
A friendly jailer, zealous, at my feet.
My children would pretend that they felt fine
When I was anxious at some hurt of theirs
As if they were the parents, for the tears
At their predicaments were often mine.

And now against the whiteness of the sheet
My mother, white faced, comforts with the story
Of Brahms, the boy, who couldn't sleep for worry
Until a chord achieved its harmony,
So down the stairs he crept to play the C.
She means her death will make a circle complete.

LINDA PASTAN

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tin." The last is an affecting, as well as a vivid, eulogy, though it is *echt* Epstein to describe one of his friend's special virtues as follows: "He was very efficient—that is to say, unfailingly correct—at spotting closeted homosexuals." By contrast, "A Former Good Guy and His Friends" may be the most disturbing thing in the book, for it exposes the author in a way he doesn't quite seem to grasp. He writes of his own high school rotarianism in a curious stretch of self-analysis:

> No one was too lowly for me to court. I became a boredom-proof listener, a full-time dispenser of bonhomie. Sashaying through the halls of our high school, greeting my innumerable conquests in the Good Guy sweepstakes, I uttered a stream of babblesome salutations not to be equaled for inanity outside a major league infield: "Hi babes," "What say," "How're you makin' it," "Take it easy," "Hang in there," "How's it goin'," "Be good," "Yo!" and 15 or 20 other utterances of equal profundity that I have since forgotten. . . . Still, I may have exulted too much, albeit secretly, in this knack I had for making friends easily. Sometimes I would try this knack out, like a professional tenor singing in the shower at home, for the sheer pleasure of exercising it. I would choose a young thug ("hoods" we then called them), or a shy girl, or someone whose background was utterly different from my own, and set out to win him or her over to my ever-enlarging stable of friends. Almost always I succeeded. It was pure art, really—friends for friends' sake.

Oddly, he believes that he has now stopped being this kind of good guy. To readers of this book, it will be clear that only his tactics and his audience have changed. Now he wants to be liked, not for his salutations but for his prejudices. He aims, it's true, to attract only a certain class of friends, and doesn't mind having enemies. But his knowing just how to put down Norman Mailer, or some other celebrated writer of the day; his saying that in the '60s "E. T. A. Hoffmann, not Abbie Hoffman, was my idea of a hero"; his report of a fan letter he once received from Anthony Powell, and the humble-servant reply he puts into print (his work, beside Powell's, was "a small quid for a large quo"): these are, above all, ingratiating attitudes, on exactly the same level of profundity as "Yo!" or "Mellow greetings, yookie dookie!"

"TO LEARN the degree of one's own mind," reflects Epstein, "let alone that of others, is not so simple. It is chiefly because he knew his own mind so wondrously well that Montaigne, among other reasons, shall always be honored." The anticlimactic "is not so simple," the extra puff in "among other reasons," and that unhappy "shall" (an illiteracy of the educated) deserve mention in the journal of "Your Basic Language Snob," which is what Epstein calls himself in one essay. But he does, in a sense, know his limitations. As he observes in a journal extract:

> Through my ersatz eminence as editor of a respected, if still less than dazzling, magazine, I find myself [now] more frequently in touch with writers and intellectuals of some—how to say it?—standing. Might as well note down these meetings, for the practice they provide in portraiture and for a 20-watt light bulb on the age.

This is certainly disarming, perhaps more so than it can afford to be. But it is meant to be dismissed. On the limitations of others, these essays contain a much larger fund of observations, seriously meant. "Fritz," for one, whom Epstein worked with once at a jewelry concession: "a fine companion," "in all a decent sort," he was "a boozer, not a nipper but a binger. He would miss work for two or three days, then come in as if nothing were amiss, his same good, gentle self. For reasons never known to me, and perhaps not to himself, he was not to become one of the world's winners." I find the last sentence so abrupt as to be almost opaque. Being a winner has nothing to do with this anecdote; and besides, what would qualify as a "reason"?

MAYBE, after all, Epstein measures himself too much against the dazzling winners of this world and compares himself too comfortably to those he thinks it safe to regard as losers. These moods, seemingly opposite, are of course allied with each other, and they bring out a streak of meanness in the author. He is more gracious, and more gentle too, when pondering the great writers whose posthumous fame has made them appear unworldly. Thus in his essay on sports, he calls himself a fair athlete among writers and a fair writer among athletes; and, thinking of Hemingway's comment about the risk of getting into the ring as a novelist with Mr. Tolstoy, he decides to turn the conceit around: "Let me put it this way: I'm ready any time to play Ping-Pong with Mr. Balzac. And if Mr. Dostoyevsky ever cares to go one-on-one half court with me or to shoot a little game of 'Horse,' I'm ready

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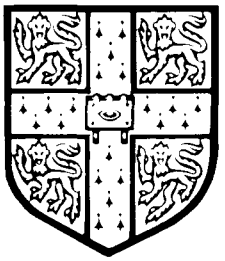

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In response to the reappearance of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," I have published my book, "One of the Elders of Zion, Berl Katznelson." He founded the Histadrut (Israel's AFL-CIO) and Kupat Holim (Israel's Blue Cross) and many other Labor institutions—AmOved (the press), Davar (the daily newspapers), and Mapai (the Labor Party).

Following the 1986 attack on the Istanbul synagogue, a Memorial service was held at the Simon Wiesenthal Institute in Los Angeles. One of the invited organizations distributed the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" in the lobby. What is the "Protocols?" In 1871, a French writer, Maurice Joly, wrote a satire on Napoleon III and his advisors, in which he portrayed the weak Napoleon III as plotting to take over the world.

In 1901, a Russian mystic, Sergius Nillus, took this work and changed the setting to the World Zionist Congress of Jews plotting to take over the world.

Henry Ford believed it to be true and printed it in serial form in his own newspaper, "The Dearborn Independent." It caused a lot of hardship for many American Jews. Finally, the case came into court as a libel suit. Ford admitted that the book was a lie and agreed to stop printing the "Protocols." Finally Hitler distributed it widely and with Hitler's defeat, the "Protocols" seemed to have died. In the last 10 to 20 years it has been published in Eastern bloc and Arabic and African nations for people who do not know what a Jew is, who believe that the book is authentic.

Leonard Winograd

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to take him on, too."

This is both funny and—a rare thing with Epstein—unmannered. Indeed, the joke is better than the worldly wisdom it pays the way for: "As with sex, so with sports: too much talk about it tends to leave one a bit dubious." This strikes me as wrong. There is no connection, not even a negative one, between performance and bragging in either of the pursuits in question. On the other hand, if what Epstein believes to be true of sex and sports were true also of "the possession of general culture," all the talk in *Once More Around the Block* would tend to leave one a bit dubious.

DAVID BROMWICH

David Bromwich is the author of *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic* (Oxford University Press).

THE LIMITS OF POWER

Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886-1948 by Shabtai Teveth

(Houghton Mifflin, 967 pp., $29.95)

The Life and Times of Menachem Begin by Amos Perlmutter

(Doubleday, 444 pp., $21.95)

David Gruen, later David Ben-Gurion, came to Turkish Palestine in 1906 as a pioneer. Menachem Begin arrived in British Palestine in 1942, a refugee in the uniform of the Anders Army, the Polish army founded in Russia in 1941 to fight the Germans. When Ben-Gurion arrived at the Arab port city of Jaffa, he walked on foot, for six hours, to Petah Tikva, the nearest Jewish settlement, to become an agricultural worker. We do not know what Begin did immediately upon his arrival. He is strangely reticent about that period in his life. But we do know that, unlike many other Jews who reached Palestine with the Polish army, Begin steadfastly refused to desert, and consequently spent his first year in the land of Israel, during the middle of World War II, working in a clerical capacity under the command of Polish officers, many of whom were known for their virulent anti-Semitism.

Nothing better epitomizes the deep differences between these two men. Each became the leader of his party and each attained, after many hardships, the post of prime minister of the Jewish state—positions surely neither of them dreamed of when they came to its shores. The lives of Ben-Gurion and Begin have a legendary quality, but the tonality is different. In Ben-Gurion's socialist Zionism, one could always discern the echoes of the Sturm und Drang of the pre-World War I Russian revolutionary tradition, with its burning drive for social and intellectual transformation, its dream of a new order—for the working class or for the Jewish people—to be born out of the ashes of an old, decrepit society. Begin's dream of Jewish national revival and glory, by contrast, carried within it the rhythms of post-World War I Polish nationalism, with all its xenophobia, its drums and its uniforms, its martial overtones and its cult of power.

These two biographies are as different as their subjects. Shabtai Teveth, a well-known Israeli writer and journalist, has devoted many years to his work. He undertook it when "The Old Man" was still alive, and spent many hours interviewing him; he was able to consult Ben-Gurion's voluminous diaries, as well as thousands of other documents housed at the Ben-Gurion archives in Sdeh Boker; and he had access to archives in Israel, Britain, and the United States. His book is a ground-breaking effort, and completely readable. It will certainly serve as the most authoritative biography for decades to come.

Amos Perlmutter's book, while not exactly a potboiler, was obviously written in some haste. The author, a former Israeli now teaching in the United States, is well acquainted with the Israeli political scene. His portrayal of Begin is incisive. He has also unearthed some fascinating

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material from the period of Begin's activity in Betar (the Revisionist youth movement) in Poland. Still, his grasp of the texture of Jewish life in Poland is sketchy; and while he was able to use archival material in Israel, he had no access to Begin's papers, nor did he interview him. Begin's period as prime minister is also given less space than it deserves; the two main events of his premiership (his success at Camp David and his failure in Lebanon) are less than fully covered. Still, this is the best book on Begin to have appeared. If Begin remains a little of an enigma to Perlmutter's readers, it is not entirely Perlmutter's fault.

But these books are most instructive, perhaps, taken together. They tell a cautionary tale: how Jewish powerlessness was turned into Jewish power in the darkest period of Jewish history; how Ben-Gurion, the great builder of Jewish power, was also aware of the limits of power; how Begin, the great glorifier of Jewish power, became its victim, undone by his inability to understand the limits of power. The need of power and the trap of power—there lies the great drama of Jewish nationalism in the Jewish state, and in the careers of its leaders.

TEVETH'S BOOK IS, in a way, a torso, since it ends on the eve of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. What is usually considered to have been Ben-Gurion's finest hour—his ability to lead the *yishuv* in Palestine to independence, to withstand the Arab onslaught, to establish the authority of the fledgling state and its ramshackle army over contending paramilitary underground movements, and to make Israel into the focus of identity for Jews around the world—all this must await Teveth's second volume. Still, Teveth is a first-rate craftsman, and he manages to identify the specific quality of Ben-Gurion's leadership even in his humble beginnings, when Ben-Gurion was just one of a rather insignificant band of socialist Zionist pioneers in Palestine and one, not necessarily the most known, of the leaders of the Poalei Zion Party.

Out of Ben-Gurion's copious diary—which, for all of its obvious self-serving bias, attests to the prodigious amount of work he was able to shoulder—there arises a vivid impression of the single-mindedness, the obstinacy, and the almost monomaniacal zeal with which he groped for the key to Jewish independence. Teveth describes all the twists and turns in the course of this quest, all Ben-Gurion's ruthlessness as well as his self-doubts. He also portrays the price Ben-Gurion had to pay for his obsession in his family life, and clearly brings out Ben-Gurion's inability, for all his political power, to make and to keep friends—a failure that became his undoing in the internecine struggles within his own Labor Party (Mapai) during the 1960s.

But most important, Teveth succeeds in revealing the *arcana imperii*, the springs of strategy and tactics that catapulted Ben-Gurion—and the Zionist movement—onto the canvas of world history. Above all else, the question to which Ben-Gurion devoted his life was how to achieve power for the Jewish people at a time when they were utterly powerless, but when only the possession of power—of real power—would save them from extinction. Here was a people living in a minority situation in all the countries of its dispersion. Here was a movement—the Zionist movement—weak, internally divided, controlling almost no resources, that wanted to achieve power and majority status in a country in which it would be equally powerless: against the Turks and the British who controlled the political fortunes of the country, against the Arabs who were a majority in the country (and

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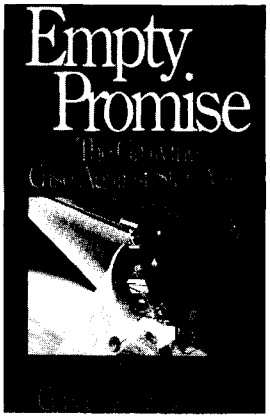

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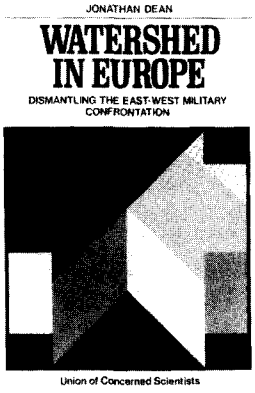

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in the region) and were in physical possession of the land. The Jews lacked free access to the country, and the majority of them did not wish to come to the new, restored community, or to support its resettlement. All this at a time when the physical survival of the Jewish people in Europe was threatened.

Ben-Gurion's breakthrough, which went beyond conventional Zionist strategy, was owed to the Russian revolutionary tradition, and to its understanding of the power of social forces to transform a situation and create new relations of power. Never an orthodox Marxist, Ben-Gurion nonetheless learned from the Marxist tradition that political power is but (but!) a "superstructure" of social and economic realities. The transformation of social and economic realities, the building of institutions, would transform political realities. It is worth remembering that, before World War I, Ben-Gurion translated Werner Sombart's *Socialism and Social Movements* into Hebrew; its lessons were not lost upon him.

Two examples will suffice. When World War I broke out, Ben-Gurion found himself, like other Jewish pioneers in Palestine who hailed from Russia, out on a limb. Not only were his legal studies in Istanbul disrupted, but he became an "enemy alien" in his own Promised Land. Most Russian Jewish immigrants to Palestine maintained their Russian passports; this gave them a measure of protection against the vagaries of the Turkish Ottoman administration, which was known for its cruelty and corruption. Now, with the outbreak of the war, all those Russian Jews, including Ben-Gurion, were about to be deported by the Turks as enemy aliens.

This was a personal, and a national, catastrophe. Yet Ben-Gurion immediately saw an opportunity to snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat, to turn political disaster into political profit. He urged his colleagues in Poalei Zion to renounce their Russian passports, adopt Ottoman nationality, and join the Turkish army. If they would participate in the defense of Palestine, he argued, they would emerge with some power and some influence in the land. (At the outset of the war he believed that Turkey would win in the Middle East.) Deportation, to be sure, would mean personal safety, but it would entail a diminution of the Jewish population in Palestine, and with it a diminution of the chances of sustaining and fulfilling the Zionist dream. Ben-Gurion contended that the future of Zionism would be decided by the force of the Jewish presence in Palestine, not in the chancelleries of Europe. Presence meant power.

The Turkish authorities were not impressed. They jailed Ben-Gurion and his colleagues, and then deported them, over their violent protests, to British-controlled Egypt. A lesser person might have lost faith and settled for sitting out the war in Egypt (as many deported Jews did). Ben-Gurion and his colleague Yitzhak Ben Zvi decided instead to go to America—there to recruit 10,000 young Jewish men to come to Palestine to fight on the side of the Turks, to substitute for the 10,000 Jews deported from the country and become the foundation on which the new society would be built.

Ben-Gurion's mission to the United States was a failure. The American leaders of Poalei Zion offered verbal support and lionized Ben-Gurion and Ben Zvi as "Palestinian heroes," but they feared that an exodus of 10,000 socialist Zionists to the land of Israel would deplete their party in America and weaken their own standing in the Jewish community, leaving them as leaders without followers. (This became the perennial dilemma of Zionist leaders in the Diaspora.) Nor was the idea of fighting on the side of the Turks very attractive to young American Jews, especially as Ben-Gurion was in the curious position of having himself been rejected by the Turkish authorities.

But then the unexpected happened: while Ben-Gurion was in America, the changing fortunes of the battlefield, as well as the Balfour Declaration, the occupation of Palestine by the British, and the entry of the United States into the conflict, made it possible for Ben-Gurion to recruit young American Jews to fight for Palestine—but on the British side! With the same zeal (but this time with success) with which he called on young American Jews to join the Turkish army, he called on them to join the British army in Palestine, again to be on the side of the victors—now Britain, not Turkey—and by their very presence influence the fate of the country. Supreme opportunism? An uncannily correct reading of history? A brilliant ability to change sides without changing his goal? All, probably.

And so Ben-Gurion joined the 40th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, despite his recent marriage to Pauline Munweis, a New York Jewish woman, who was already pregnant with his child. He trained in Canada, traveled to Egypt via Britain, and finally returned in 1918 to Palestine, this time in the uniform of a British NCO. He (and a few thousand American Jewish volunteers) thus arrived in Eretz Israel precisely when its future was to be decided: armed, able to restore the disrupted life of the *yishuv*, with access to the British military powers, prepared to set up new settlements, planning the establishment of the Histadruth. In no time at all Ben-Gurion was catapulted, with his party, into the center of what was to emerge as the British Mandate of Palestine. Few people had emerged so triumphantly, after so turbulent an odyssey, from World War I: Pilsudski perhaps, Lenin certainly. Ben-Gurion, too, knew how not to be left behind when history was taking its great leaps.

IN 1938 BEN-GURION arrived, after many agonies, at a similar understanding of the historical process. By that time he was chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine and a world-known Zionist leader. And the gathering clouds had ominously darkened the Jewish horizon: *Kristallnacht* proved the murderousness of Nazism, and made the danger for Europe's Jews vividly clear. In letters, speeches, and articles, extensively quoted by Teveth, Ben-Gurion tirelessly warned of the danger; unlike so

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many others, he had no doubt that the Nazis posed an unprecedented threat to Jewish life.

But there was more. At the same time, at the St. James Conference in London, it became clear to the Zionist leadership that Britain was abandoning the Balfour Declaration and was planning to hand over Palestine to the Arabs. The more the danger of war became clear to the British government, the more evident became its strategy of appeasing the Arabs, whose strategic cooperation (or at least their neutrality) was considered crucial to a British war effort. The Arabs sat astride vast territories, astride the road to India. Since they were inclined toward the Nazis, they had to be accommodated, and fawned upon. The Jews, by contrast, were powerless, persecuted, utterly dispensable from the British point of view. Thus it was that at precisely the moment when the appeasement of Hitler ceased to be Britain's policy, the appeasement of the Arabs became Britain's policy. The Jews, and the *yishuv* in particular, were trapped. In 1939, a few months after the St. James Conference, there appeared the White Paper limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine, prohibiting Jewish land purchases in most of the country, and relegating the Jews to the status of a perpetual minority in what the British in 1917 had committed themselves to make into the Jewish National Home.

What was the Zionist response to be? For Weizmann, it was a dark hour: he felt betrayed by his British friends, and went into an eclipse that lasted more or less until his death. Jabotinsky and the Revisionists, equally British-oriented, were equally in disarray. In 1940 Jabotinsky died, a deeply disappointed man, his policy of making Zionism into the Border Police of the British Empire in shambles. Some Revisionist splinter groups, like the Stern gang, of which Yitzhak Shamir was a member, toyed with the idea of a possible alliance with fascist Italy, and even with Nazi Germany, to help oust the British. (The Nazis did not respond to this ridiculous idea.) Begin, when he arrived in Palestine and became head of the Irgun, led his organization into a revolt against the British even as the British were fighting the Nazis. These were actions born of desperation, but still leading nowhere.

It was left to Ben-Gurion to articulate the complex strategy that became the main Zionist response to the crisis: to fight the Nazis as though there were no White Paper and to fight the White Paper as if there were no Nazis. With a keen understanding of the cruel dialectic of power, and in what Teveth rightly considers the apotheosis of his leadership, Ben-Gurion set out to lay the foundations of this strategy. In 1938, in the middle of the St. James Conference, realizing that the British were abandoning the Jews to their fate, Ben-Gurion decided, as before, to go to America. During the war he spent more than a year there. He had grasped the centrality of the United States, and of American Jewry, for the forging of a power that could not be dismissed during and after the war. It was in 1939 that Ben-Gurion began to make American Jewry into the main pivot of political mobilization for Zionism, to fashion the American Jewish community, with all its resources and (sometimes conflicting) institutions, into an instrument of pressure that would move the American administration to influence British policy in the land of Israel. The transformation of American Jewry into a major asset of Zionism—a cornerstone of Israeli policy until this very day—was the victory Ben-Gurion clutched out of the double defeat Zion-

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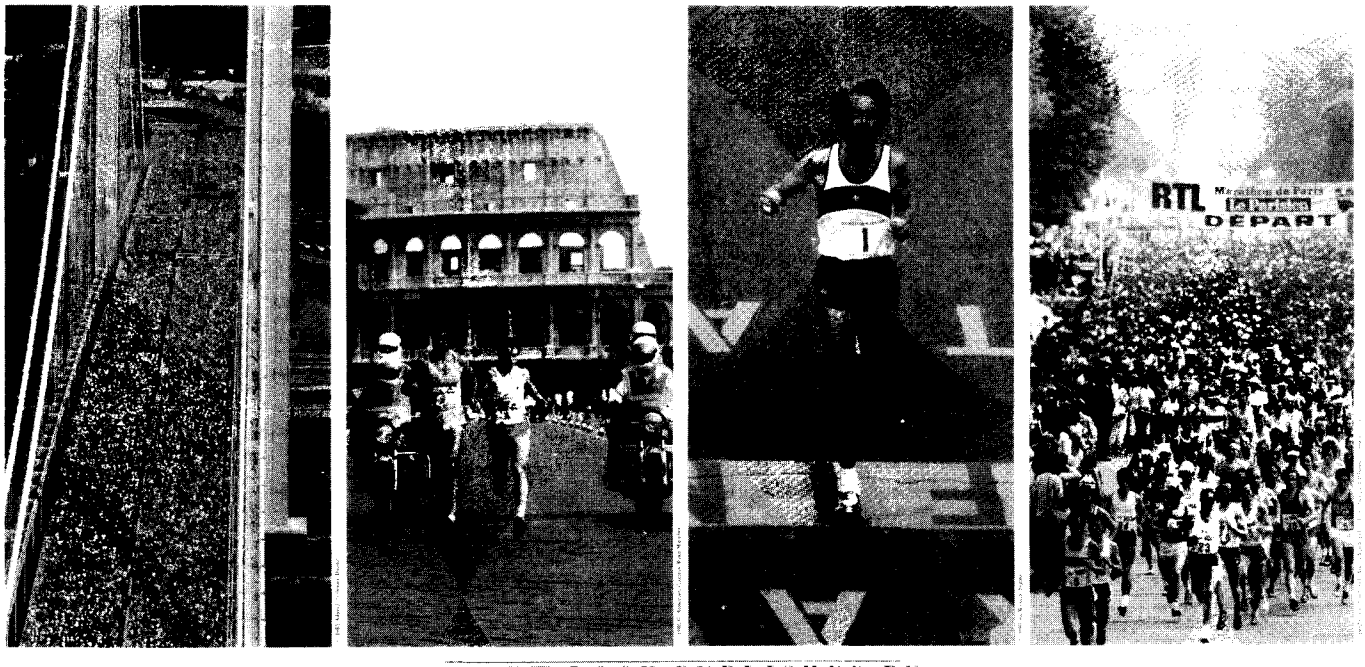
BY SANDY TREADWELL



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ism suffered at the hands of Nazi persecution and British abandonment.

Next Ben-Gurion had to mobilize the Jewish community in Palestine for the twin and complex struggle against Germans and British alike. In 1939 he placed the *yishuv* on a war footing. It had to be prepared to help the British fight the Nazis, to fight the British for immigration, and in the future, inevitably, to fight the Arabs. Thus tens of thousands of Palestinian Jews joined the British army—but at the same time arms caches were laid out, new settlements were founded to enlarge the area of Palestine under effective Jewish control, and a clandestine Jewish navy was created to bring illegal immigrants into the country. Innovative institutions, combining military service with agricultural work, were established.

SELDOM HAD SUCH a complicated plan been carried out by a persecuted and almost completely powerless people. That the *yishuv* did not perish under the burden of the odds was the historic achievement of Ben-Gurion's foresight, stubbornness, and stamina. And he had to fight for his ideas day in and day out, not only against the Revisionists but also against various groups within the Labor movement itself.

Still, Ben-Gurion, more than any of the founders of Israeli power, was supremely aware of the limits of power. Time and time again he withstood the temptation to overreach, to spread Israel's power too far and too thin. In 1948, during the War of Independence, he withstood pressure from some of the more daring military commanders to capture the West Bank; he insisted that such an enterprise could undermine the Jewish nature of the fledgling state. During the Sinai campaign of 1956, after a few heady days, Ben-Gurion realized that Israel had to withdraw, and settled down to the hard bargaining that gave Israel its longest period (1957-67) without war. And in 1967, out of office and an embittered old man, he advocated the return of all of Israel's conquests, except East Jerusalem and possibly the Golan Heights, for the sake of a peace. It turned out that the long and hard efforts that went into the creation of Jewish strength—it was creation out of nothing—had left Ben-Gurion with a vivid understanding of hubris, of the grasping that can bring down everything.

While Ben-Gurion worked with the nuts and bolts of power, Begin sang paeans to it. Compared with the turbulent Ben-Gurion, Begin is an oddly gentle person, his fiery rhetoric notwithstanding. He is a bookish type (though it was Ben-Gurion who liked to discuss books, not always competently); a model family man, without the conceit of splendid isolation, with a warm and completely loyal circle of friends. How did this rather passive man achieve his place in politics, and in history? Obviously there was also steel somewhere inside. But it was not Ben-Gurion's sort of steel. If Ben-Gurion possessed the zeal of the revolutionary, Begin possessed the cunning of the survivor. In this respect he epitomized, more than the volcanic Ben-Gurion, the traditional Jewish art of survival in adversity. It was no wonder that so many Diaspora Jews would see Begin as "the most Jewish" of Israel's prime ministers. Ben-Gurion, with his radical demands for the transformation of Jewish life, was a master at making Diaspora Jews uncomfortable; many of their leaders—Abba Hillel Silver, Stephen Wise, Nahum Goldman—bristled against his "Palestino-centric" view of the world. But Begin never made Jews feel uncomfortable, only proud. As Perlmutter remarks, Begin "rose to embody all Jewish suffering and defiance."

TO LOSE, as Begin did, eight consecutive elections, between 1949 and 1977, and still not lose his spirit—and the support of his own party—is an act of political survival probably unequaled in the annals of parliamentary democracy. It required enormous patience, self-effacement, and the ability to bide one's time while in the wings, despised, almost an outcast. Perlmutter shows that such behavior was a recurrent pattern in Begin's life.

Begin had little flair for organization and for determining the priorities of policy, but he was extremely effective as a public speaker and provoked intense feelings in his followers. He became head of Betar in Poland in 1939 when a vacuum accidentally appeared in the movement's leadership, and this only a few years after Jabotinsky had dressed him down at the Betar conference in Krakow for an irresponsible and bombastic talk about a war against the British. Similarly, in 1943 in Palestine, Begin became head of the Irgun when a leadership in disarray settled on him as the least threatening choice. And finally, in 1977 he became prime minister more due to Labor's failures than to his own achievements, which after all were no more impressive in 1977 than at the time of any of the previous elections that he had lost. (In fact he was bedridden after a heart attack during most of the 1977 campaign.)

Perlmutter ably highlights the passivity in Begin's successes, as well as in his failures. Before World War II, there is no indication that Begin ever seriously considered immigration to the land of Israel. He was a firebrand, of course; his public language advocating the creation of Jewish legions to capture Palestine from the British represented the most radical approach in Zionist ideology. But nowhere was there a concrete plan, a coming to grips with the when and the how, a grappling with practical and pedestrian problems such as housing, provisioning, and social integration.

He did reach Palestine, almost drifted there, after fleeing Warsaw (leaving his movement leaderless as the Germans approached) via Soviet-occupied Wilno; he was imprisoned in a Soviet camp until the German invasion, when he enlisted in the Anders Army. There is no record of his feelings upon his arrival in Palestine in his strange Polish uniform and under an alien flag. For a whole year he stayed in Polish uniform, rather bizarrely for an impassioned Zionist activist who grew up under the shadow of Polish anti-Semitism. His discharge was negotiated by some of the Irgun's leaders under conditions not altogether clear unto this very day. Perlmutter suggests, though he fails to furnish conclusive proof, that in return for his temporary release Begin committed himself to go to the United States to drum up Jewish support for the Polish government in exile, about which most Jews were understandably lukewarm.

THEN, suddenly, Begin emerges as leader of the Irgun, in command of people much older than himself, and much more seasoned in military affairs and clandestine operations. Why? Perlmutter quotes the widow of Aryeh Ben-Eliezer, one of the veteran Irgun commanders:

> Menachem was not considered by the Palestinian Etzel [Irgun] members a military professional. They respected the man who had been Betar's Poland chief. But they were military guerrillas, warriors, not Diaspora ideologues. They needed a pamphleteer, a revolutionary, and nationalist philosopher. They were in need of a writer, one that could write with a great deal of

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passion. Above all they actually needed somebody who knew next to nothing about military matters. Begin was the ideal answer.

This is Begin, exactly: a weaver of spells with words, with a vision of power and glory to which downtrodden Jews kindle, but woefully uncomprehending and unrealistic about the uses, and the limitations, of power. His career is strewn with failures that must be attributed to his utter unfamiliarity with the meaning of force, and with military affairs: the tragic fiasco of the bombing of the King David Hotel, in which dozens of innocent civilians, many of them Jews, were killed in an operation whose planning went wrong; the massacre of Arabs in Deir Yassin in 1948; the Altalena affair in June 1948, when the Irgun tried to land a shipload of arms in defiance of the provisional government of Israel; and last, but certainly not least, the war in Lebanon. In none of these cases did Begin take a hand in the planning of the operation, either by the Irgun or by the Israel Defense Forces. He deferred to his subordinates and returned to his visions.

And in none of these cases did Begin distance himself from the operations when they misfired. Quite the contrary: he defended them, even glorified them. A more responsible politician would have fired those who had led him catastrophically astray. Begin stuck by his lieutenants, even as they entangled him in actions that brought shame and calumny to his movement, and, in the case of Lebanon, to the state of Israel. There is no doubt that he was unaware of what his underlings were doing. But he was made to seem the culprit. This mild and courteous man became identified in the public consciousness, as he will be in history, with these terrible events.

Now Begin is a recluse in his own home, venturing outside once a year for the memorial service for his wife, Aliza. His punishing isolation is self-inflicted. He has many supporters in Israel even now. The people of Israel—the whole Middle East—are deeply in his debt for the Camp David accords; the inspiration might have been Sadat's, the details might have been filled in by Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizman, but there is no doubt that without Begin the peace treaty would not have been achieved. This is his everlasting mark on the history of his region. Yet he is known, this man who gave Israel its only peace treaty with an Arab country, as a man of war. An irony of politics? Clio's ingratitude? No, there is a deeper reason for Begin's strange fate.

It is, again, his old flaw. For Begin, the peace treaty with Egypt was a vehicle for Israel's continued control of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. The "autonomy" articulated by Begin was really a thin veil with which to disguise, and to implement, that control; the war in Lebanon, which aimed to destroy not only the PLO but also any Palestinian politics, was consecrated to the same goal. Again the nemesis of power overwhelmed Begin. Ben-Gurion, who built power, knew its limitations. Begin, the rhapsodist of power, never grasped its limitations, because he never really knew its reality. (The Irgun's achievements in the war of 1948 were tiny, and were undone by the Altalena.) Finally, inevitably, he became the victim of his own chimerical vision of power. Sabra and Shatila at the end of his career, just like Deir Yassin at the beginning (both unplanned by Begin, the second not even carried out by Jews), became his undoing.

Both Ben-Gurion and Begin left politics under a cloud. In the bitter squabbling of the Lavon affair, Ben-Gurion was virtually hounded out of his own party. Begin resigned in the aftermath of the Lebanon war and of the report of the Kahan Commission, never publicly explaining his reasons, saying simply, "I can't go on." But even the scenes of their retirement tell the difference between the men. Ben-Gurion, an angry prophet, returned to Sdeh Boker, a new and struggling kibbutz in the Negev desert, and called upon the youth of the country to follow him. They didn't, though his vision is still on Israel's agenda. Begin moved, in complete seclusion, to an apartment on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It overlooks, of all places, Deir Yassin. There are those who are troubled by this. They do not appreciate its appropriateness. For Begin, Israel was always more of a messianic abstraction than a messy reality. It is entirely possible that he has never been aware of the identity of the stony hills that he sees through the window of his self-imposed exile in the Promised Land.

SHLOMO AVINERI

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translated by Carol Cosman

(University of Chicago Press, 435 pp., $27.50)

Flaubert once suggested that the artist should arrange things so that posterity would not know he had ever lived. He was thinking about narrative method rather than the protection of privacy, which is just as well, since his cramped and solitary life has become so public, so much a literary legend. He is the author of *Madame Bovary* and *Sentimental Education*, but he is also Saint Gustave, grumbling martyr in the cause of art as hard labor. "He felt of his vocation almost nothing but the difficulty," Henry James said, and that was putting it mildly. Difficulty was Flaubert's element, his only morality and a source of exquisite self-torture. "He took life for the most part," James also said, "as a man takes a violent toothache . . . sustained only by the rage and the habit of effort."

Louise Colet's *Lui*, first published in 1859 and now translated for the first time, shows what such a martyr could look like to betrayed and disaffected eyes. Flaubert appears in the novel—or disappears in it, to borrow an inflection from Nabokov, since the figure is mostly off stage—as Léonce, a groaning writer hard at work on a big book, who offers his love to the heroine, Stéphanie, in torrential letters of literary theory, interspersed with infrequent fleshly weekends. This is an only slightly travestied version of Flaubert's liaison with Colet, which came and went in two installments (1846-48, 1851-54). His letters to her about the agony of composing *Madame Bovary* are at the center of his legend. "What atrocious work," he moans, "what a penance. Oh art, art. What is this crazed monster which eats our hearts, and why?" There is much more in this vein. And of course there is plenty of subtle and dogged literary discussion.

But Flaubert is not the *lui* of Colet's title, partly because she meant to put him in his place, partly because he belongs to a later, more ascetic conception of the artist: he was not extravagant and doomed and scandalous enough for Colet's romantic iconography. *Lui*, the man who was all those things, is the poet Alfred de Musset, who in the person of Albert de Lincel tells the story of his affair with George Sand, alias Antonia Back. The implication is that this really is his story at last, a correction of those earlier, double-barreled works of gossip called *Elle et Lui* (by Sand herself) and *Lui et Elle* (by Musset's brother).

Lui is clumsily put together, but it communicates its disheveled feelings well enough. It is chiefly a work of literary mythology, a product of the 19th century's dream factory. There is romance in the forest of Fontainebleau, a masked ball in Venice, stormy quarrels everywhere. The poets are witty and dissolute, the women loving and deceived. There is more moping than thinking, and more posturing than either. Names are constantly dropped, cracking their frail disguises as they fall, and others are not even disguised: "I met him in Gérard's salon. There's a painter with an incisive mind. . . . That's where I met Balzac also. . . . What do you think of him?" Nothing but the best, nobody but the famous. The translator suggests that Colet thought she had "star quality." Well, she was beautiful, and she knew the stars.

Musset comes across as babyish and spoiled, but this is no doubt a reflection of Colet's modest talent and indulgent mythology rather than of any insight or malice. Indeed, the most interesting feature of the book is its lack of insight, the eager naïveté with which it parades its confused emotions. For there is a sense in which Flaubert is *lui* after all: not the hero of the book, but its target. Colet and her heroine want us to believe—they want themselves to believe—that they erroneously gave up the deep, troubled love of a great poet for the shallow half-commitment of a second-rate novelist, refused a bond with real glory for a correspondence course.

There is a splendid scene of unintended high comedy in which Stéphanie shows the novelist's letters to the poet, who can tell at a glance that the man and the work will never amount to anything. You can't fool a genius. Show him a line or two and he will detect the "monstrous personality," the unloving pedant that the fond mistress could not unmask. Colet's view of Flaubert's emotional miserliness is probably sound (although she can't picture his warmth and wit and real suffering), as is her sense of the miserable role assigned to women in this world of tyrannical and pampered men: "Men will always deny us women freedom in love and dignity in frankness." What is funny, and touching, is her attempt to revise her relationship with Flaubert, to fill it out with high-powered competition, to cast Musset in the big role he wouldn't play in life.

"Je suis un homme-plume," Flaubert wrote to Colet in 1852. I am a human pen. Not a penman, as Joyce later had it, nor a pen-man, as Helen Lane renders it in Mario Vargas Llosa's study of Flaubert. Not a man with a consuming vocation, but a man who has been swallowed by an instrument. He is all literature. Between this legend and the haunting, seemingly self-sufficient works there is little room for the mere facts of Flaubert's dull life; they seem random and lost. Vargas Llosa appears to know this, since his title comes from another Flaubert letter (not to Colet): "The only way of tolerating existence is to lose oneself in literature as in a perpetual orgy."

But he makes heavy weather of the relation between Flaubert and *Madame Bovary*, already beautifully mapped in any case by Francis Steegmuller. Vargas Llosa writes in question-and-answer form: "What was the point of departure

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of *Madame Bovary*? How much time did it take . . . to write *Madame Bovary* and what are the characteristics of the manuscript? In what form did Flaubert project his personal and family life into *Madame Bovary*?" The answers are straight, schoolboyish essays of varying length. I take it that the procedure is ironic, borrowed from a later chapter in Joyce's *Ulysses* that has the same form; but I can't find the point of the irony. Perhaps the irony is on me for looking for irony. Vargas Llosa discusses what he calls "real reality" and "fictional reality," as if none of those words had ever given anyone a moment's trouble, and suggests that the two realities are distinguished by the second's having an "added element," or being a "manipulation" of the first. But when Flaubert wrote that everything one invents is true, he was hinting at an altogether more complex process and relation.

Fortunately Vargas Llosa doesn't really need this lumbering conceptual equipment, and his mind is quick enough to overcome it. He is a novelist and several kinds of critic. For a start, he is the old-fashioned aficionado, in love with Emma Bovary, hooked on the purple prose of her dreams, saddened by the thought that Flaubert himself could speak ill of her. The fan's "unrequited passion" is a happy one in the end:

> I should be jealous, but I am not. . . . I know that in the territory where her beauty shines forth, no one except the country doctor, Rodolphe, and Léon will possess her, and that in the territory where I find myself, she cannot give anyone more than she has given me.

Vargas Llosa is eloquent about his taste for old bad movies, for a quality in them and in Emma Bovary that is neither camp nor simple melodrama, but a kind of truthfulness that high art is usually too grand for—the reflection of an "incurable materialism," the flash of "a moderate touch of vulgarity":

> I am speaking here of a certain distortion or exacerbation of feeling . . . of the intrusion of the comic on the serious, the grotesque on the tragic, the absurd on the logical, the impure on the pure, the ugly on the beautiful, as a product of naïveté, ignorance, laziness, and routine.

This quality is precisely what Flaubert pursues with his desolate enthusiasm, and the effect is neither cruelty nor tenderness, but the lucid registry of the banal—a great bleak poem of mediocrity.

"Masterpieces are *stupid*," Flaubert wrote to Colet. "They have the quiet composure . . . of large animals and mountains." *Madame Bovary* is not stupid enough by this criterion, or not entirely stupid. Heroine and author are too lively and too anxious. But the definition is not perverse. It points toward the horizon of calm at the end of Flaubert's agonies, and it excludes from the masterpiece all literary antics, wit, showing off, and implicitly all display of the author's temperament and opinions. This is what Flaubert (and later Eliot) meant by impersonality: not a suppression of the self but a discretion in art, a form of austerity; a resistance to the lure of looking intelligent or soulful on the page.

But Vargas Llosa really comes into his own when the novelist and a descriptive, technical type of critic in him join forces. The language gets sharper, the slightly overripe rhetoric fades, and we watch a fine reader (and writer) reading. He explores the obsessive binary organization of Flaubert's fiction, notes that "things, persons, and events . . . give the impression of manifesting themselves *only* through dualities." "It almost scares / A man, the way things come in pairs," Robert Frost wrote; but it didn't scare Flaubert, because for him they didn't come in any other way. As Vargas Llosa says, this is a magical, rather than a historical, mode of thought.

Vargas Llosa calls Emma a "tragic feminist," because she herself wants to be a man, and is indeed, in many ways, more of a man than all the men around her. What is tragic is the hideous tangle of uncomprehended assumptions that such a phrase evokes. Vargas Llosa sees that Emma's materialism—"She is a woman whose enjoyment is not complete unless it takes on material form: she projects her body's pleasure into things"—is reflected in a narrative that keeps turning persons into objects and vice versa, and that the materialism of Flaubert's art requires an allegiance to a "motionless time" in which statues or tableaux can form: "Like the figures in a family portrait set in a Flemish interior, the characters are not *doing* this or that; they are *being* it: their presence is their essence."

With all the enthusiasm of a fellow craftsman, Vargas Llosa lists a whole deck of narrators in *Madame Bovary*, ranging from the mysterious "we" who begins the book (and quickly vanishes) to whatever narrative agent is responsible for all the clichés set off in italics, as if disowned. But Helen Lane, whose translation is generally careful, doesn't seem to understand what an *idée reçue* is. It isn't a "universally accepted opinion." It is a stupid, ready-made opinion with pretensions to universality. It is what people think they ought to think and above all to say, a form of unwitting self-parody. Examples from Flaubert's projected dictionary of such things are:

Ambition: always crazy when it is not noble.
Art: leads to the workhouse.
Doubt: worse than negation.
Paganini: never tuned his violin.
Suicide: proof of cowardice.
Traveler: always intrepid.

VARGAS LLOSA SAYS he is "not an overly enthusiastic admirer of *L'Idiot de la famille*." Condescension seems to be the accepted tone for talking of this late work of Sartre's, which appeared in 1971-72. An *idée reçue*, perhaps. (*Sartre*: solemn and interminable, never stopped tuning his political and philosophical violin.) Admittedly the appearances aren't good. *The Family Idiot* runs to some 2,800 pages in French. It isn't finished, indeed seems to be only just getting going as it fades out, promising the critical reading of *Madame Bovary* everyone was waiting for. We could be forgiven for thinking of the ending of *Portnoy's Complaint*: "Now vee may perhaps to begin. Yes?"

The appearances are wrong, though. The book that one might pick up as a

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good deed (as I did) turns out to be an extraordinary adventure, some sort of rambling masterpiece, taking in more of the late modern landscape than any of us thought we would see in one work. It is garrulous and repetitive—"Let us not be afraid of repetition," Sartre says, and you wonder if a little fear might not be a good thing—but it is also relaxed and witty, full of elegant throwaways (the aim of Mallarmé's art, for example, is "quietly to ruin sumptuous words"). The book requires our concentration and our patience, but it tolerates, even welcomes, our skepticism. And it is exactly the reverse of "Cyclopean," as Vargas Llosa calls it. It incorporates Lacan, Derrida, and Barthes as if they were just part of the air we breathe; and it is more lucid and less mannered than any of them.

What we have now in English, thanks to the scrupulous and imaginative work of Carol Cosman, are two books (they match the first French volume) that take the young Flaubert through the process of "constitution" (the action upon you of your world and especially your family, everything that makes you what are) and into the beginning of "personalization" (your own response to what your world makes you, your way of turning these pressures and conditions into a life).

The great theme of the book is how one becomes a writer, how what Sartre nicely calls "the child without qualities" became "the author of *Madame Bovary*." Or, how the family idiot turned out to be a genius. It is unlikely that anyone ever called the child Flaubert the family idiot. Sartre is more convincing when he suggests only that Flaubert's family made him *feel* like the family idiot, like a misfit and a failure. He was a distinguished doctor's son who couldn't become either a doctor or a lawyer. He was not the daughter his mother was hoping for. He was a perennial second son, daunted by the "Trinity" of the Father, the Mother, and the Older Brother.

His father teased him, kept him at a distance. His mother offered him "love without tenderness," the reflection of a feelingless devotion to the idea of the family. The family is everything in this reading. It is, in turn, determined by the larger structures of history; and Sartre has many astute things to say about the social and cultural contradictions of the time. But for Flaubert, and for almost all of the early parts of this book, the family is the only horizon. The great hermit, the solitary figure of the legend, never became an individualist, as the sociable Stendhal did, because the "terrible family"—the respectable, self-important Flaubert clan, pride of the province—haunted him to the end. Sartre evokes the story, possibly apocryphal, of Matisse's feeling all his successes were spoiled because his father didn't believe in his painting: "It was not, I imagine, entirely true, but it shows that glory is a family matter."

Is Sartre's reading of Flaubert's life and times true? "This is a fabrication, I confess. I have no proof that it was so. . . . Never mind . . . the *real* explanation, I can imagine without the least vexation, may be precisely the contrary of what I invent, but *in any case* it will have to follow the paths I have indicated." No. Other explanations could follow other paths, but they could not, I suggest, be "precisely the contrary" of Sartre's, because he, with his tact and creative imagination, has picked up so much of what any explanation would have to contain. Neither truth nor fiction in any simple sense, Sartre's book admirably answers his own large question, the one he asked in *Search for a Method* and which led him to Flaubert: "What, at this point in time, can we know about a man?" The answer is: not much and a tremendous amount. We know as much as we are willing to work for, as much as we can sympathetically imagine. What we know is the sense we make of the evidence we have. But we shall always have to *make* the sense, and this is what we watch Sartre doing, all his cards on the table.

HOW DO WE KNOW Flaubert's family made him feel he was an idiot? Sartre's work begins with a brilliant analysis of a reminiscence by Flaubert's niece, his sister's child:

> My grandmother had taught her elder son to read. She wanted to do as much for the second and set to work. Little Caroline at Gustave's side learned rapidly; he could not keep up, and after straining to understand these signs that meant nothing to him, he would begin to sob. He was, however, avid for knowledge. . . .

Sartre comments that "this poor relationship with words" was to be decisive. Language is a "poor conductor," in the electrical sense; the child suffers from a "poor insertion into the universe of language." "He will read, he will write, but language will always remain in his eyes a double, suspect creature that talks to itself all alone inside him . . . ." For the adult Flaubert, language is "an interminable commonplace," a sort of deadwood that only others (the real idiots) can actually believe in. All this is very interesting. It suggests that a great writer might have something like the reverse of a gift: a deprivation, or a despair.

But more to my point here is Sartre's comment on the story of Flaubert's father visiting a former mistress, leaving Mme Flaubert and the children in the street while he did:

> There is . . . a certain delicacy in a man who, after thirty years, determines to revisit a woman he once loved; he is doing homage to his mistress. . . . The same man, unfortunately, behaves like a boor with his wife. . . . He still respects his wife, enough in any case to tell her the truth, not enough to spare her a long wait, right in the street, while he goes to rejoin his youth and shed a few tears for himself.

Sartre's sense of this man, of this family, is not a fabrication, or the effect of some theory. It is a way of *living* with these texts—these memories, letters, novels—that attends to them closely, and animates them.

Sartre offers an elaborate and amused interpretation of Flaubert's sexual needs. Had he homosexual tastes? He boasted of homosexual exploits on his travels to the Orient. Sartre doesn't believe a word of it; and neither, now, do I. His interpretation of Flaubert's bragging tone and unlikely reticences is entirely persuasive. What Flaubert wanted, the place in sexuality where constitution and personalization met, was to be a heterosexual man and also a passive object: the child a mother could love. His homosexuality is "secondhand" (*d'occasion*—Carol Cosman makes a rare slip in translating this as "sporadic").

Sartre mocks Flaubert, gets angry with him, suffers with him, is sorry for him, gets angry on his behalf—all as befits a writer who knows his man. This may not be our Flaubert—it can't be, it's Sartre's—but it is as close as we shall get to the person who hid in the legend and vanished in the books. Flaubert described what most tempted him as a writer as "comedy taken to extremes, comedy that doesn't make you laugh." Sartre allows us to see the pain and the pathos in such an idea, and its centrality to Flaubert's life and art. Saint Gustave was a funny fellow, but neither he nor anybody else was laughing.

MICHAEL WOOD

Michael Wood is professor of English at the University of Exeter.

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CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 4*

and sold to American youth like a pair of sneakers. Now the song is selling the sneakers. I fail to observe where any breach of values has occurred.

MARK K. SPANO
Falls Church, Virginia

FAITH AND FINANCE

To the editors:

Crocker Coulson, in a review of books on liberation theology ("Heaven Can Wait," May 4), writes that John Maynard Keynes viewed Leninism as combining religion and business, which Europeans for some centuries have kept in different compartments of the soul. He adds that Keynes preferred to keep "questions of faith and questions of finance . . . as far apart as possible." The interpretation of this famous passage from Keynes misses the main point of Keynes's essay. He was approving this aspect of the Russian experiment because it combined a new attitude toward the love of money with a new religious condemnation of it. He says later in the essay that "a society in which this is even partially true is a tremendous innovation." In his 1930 essay "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren," he wrote of Britain being nag-ridden for 200 years by pseudo-moral principles, and foresees in the coming era of economic abundance that we may be able to "return to some of the most sure and certain principles of religion and traditional virtue." Keynes was very critical of laissez-faire capitalism, particularly its cultural aspects. So we cannot be sure that he would favor keeping faith and finance in separate compartments of the human soul.

CHARLES H. HESSION
Bellport, New York

MASSACHUSETTS MEDICINE

To the editors:

I would like to correct your Notebook ("Lawyers, 1; Doctors, 0," May 4) in which it is written, "No doctor is forced to accept Medicare patients, so talk of government 'interference' is nonsense." In fact, Chapter 475, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, requires by law the acceptance of patients with Medicare by physicians as necessary for state licensure. Is that sort of government "interference" beyond the talk that you would consider nonsensical?

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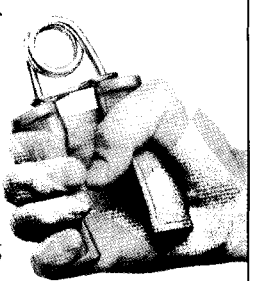

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

A Wonderful Man

REMEMBER DON REGAN? At last check, he had drifted off into the happy land of $20,000 speaking engagements. But it seems like only yesterday that the clamor for his resignation was Issue 1 for the entire Washington opinion industry. What was all the fuss about? For all I know, Regan was a lousy White House chief of staff, whatever that means. But judging from what's been disclosed so far, he was not a major player in the White House's secret operations. Instead, he seems to have been a victim of the early conventional wisdom about Iranamok. In the immediate aftermath of the scandal, there was the Cowboy Theory: the NSC staff went out of control, hurting a president they intended to help. Then, after the Tower Commission report, there was the Management Style Corollary: out-to-lunch Reagan needs vigilant subordinates to tame the zealots. Either way, Regan could be vilified. As chief of staff, his job was supposedly both to keep track of the cowboys and to compensate for the president's own administrative sloth. But now it appears that Reagan was engaged after all. Iranamok happened because, at least in broad terms, he said he wanted it to. The scandal isn't about some cowboys getting out of hand, but about an entire secret, unaccountable government-within-a-government. And if the president approved of that, who was Don Regan to say no?

ONE OF THE MOST interesting tidbits in Robert McFarlane's testimony before the Iranamok committee was his rambling soliloquy in defense of Oliver North, who, he said, "is really getting a bum rap." North "is quite cynical about government," McFarlane explained. Why? It all goes back to North's experiences in Vietnam. There, North saw America abandon an ally "extremely legally," so he swore "never to be party to such a thing again." Apparently, then, there is a post-Vietnam syndrome on the right, too—and contempt for democracy, the law, and institutional procedure is essential to it. The media and the lawyers, but especially Congress and certain elements of the foreign policy bureaucracy (i.e., the government itself, about which North was so cynical) conspired to sap American will in Vietnam, and they were about to do the same in Nicaragua. This time they wouldn't get away with it. The point isn't that North thought that what he was doing was within the law, but that the law didn't really matter. This was war.

THIS ROUGH-AND-READY Marine-think, born out of bitter personal experiences, has taken a somewhat more elegant form in certain pessimistic musings of neoconservatism. Take "The Future of Foreign Policy" by Michael Ledeen, in the June issue of the *American Spectator*. This extensive meditation is too subtle for summarizing, of course, but the burden of Ledeen's argument is that too much democracy is screwing up American foreign policy: there are too many cooks. "One cannot possibly conduct foreign policy with more than 500 secretaries of state," he observes, and, as if Congress and the bureaucracy weren't meddlesome enough, "those few persons" who really understand "the national interest" are constantly fending off the policy intrusions of lawyers, judges, and the media as well. Let's leave aside the matter of whether the "national interest" is knowable only to a few wise men like Michael Ledeen. The interesting point here is that he doesn't include "consultants" on his list of busybodies harassing "those few persons." Yet it was as a consultant to the NSC that Ledeen introduced Manucher Ghorbanifar to the highest levels of the U.S. government. Putting this international riffraff in a position to become the intermediary between the United States and Iran during the arms-for-hostages dealings was Ledeen's most recent contribution to the national interest. According to documents in the Tower Commission report, he presented Ghorbanifar as "a wonderful man . . . almost too good to be true." The CIA, regarding Ghorbanifar as "a talented fabricator," gave him a lie detector test in 1986. Ghorbanifar flunked.

THE CLOSEST LEDEEN and the *American Spectator* come to full disclosure about Ledeen's role in the affair is a curiously elliptical editor's note explaining that the article is "adapted from a piece originally commissioned by *Partisan Review* but then rejected by that magazine after the outbreak of the Iran-*contra* business." The piece was rejected, in part, because of an internal *Partisan Review* controversy over Ledeen's role in the affair. In any case, a principal "adaptation" in the *American Spectator* version is a sermonette about the lessons of the Iran initiative. With the failure of the operation now too painfully obvious to deny, Ledeen still has the chutzpah to insist that everything would have been fine if we had but limited our objectives to a diplomatic opening to Iran based on strategic considerations, and not gotten mixed up with hostages. The assertion is dubious, but at least it exculpates Ledeen; by all accounts, he never advocated trading arms for hostages. Even so, doesn't he still bear some responsibility for the ultimate fiasco? "We somehow convinced ourselves that the best way to deal with the problem . . . was to offer weapons to the regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini," he laments, blaming Americans' chronic tendency toward moralism for the failure. But the "somehow" consisted largely of the false promises of Ghorbanifar, Ledeen's trusted confidant. In fact, Ghorbanifar was so eager to get the United States to sell arms, and Ledeen so eager to promote Ghorbanifar, that North began to suspect that Ledeen and Ghorbanifar might have worked out some secret deal to share the profits from the sale of weapons to Iran. Ledeen denied this to the Tower Commission, and so far no evidence has emerged to support the accusation. But whether or not there was any such monkey business, you'd think that the Ghorbanifar connection would have called for some more amplification from Ledeen. Instead Ledeen, "by nature optimistic," takes the high road. There is hope for the American people. There is a way out of their pitiable penchant for isolationism and "endless debate." What this country needs is "a tremendous effort . . . to educate a new generation of Americans to the realities of international affairs and hence to the requirements for our own people." With Michael Ledeen in charge of the curriculum? I'll stick with democracy, thanks.

C. L.

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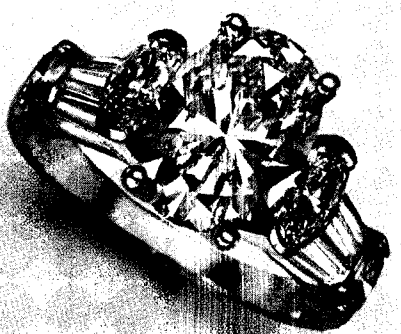

The ring shown features a quality diamond of 2 carats.

A CARAT OR MORE.
EXTRAORDINARY DIAMONDS FOR EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN.

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SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

Kings: 12 mg. "tar," 0.9 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report Feb. 1985.

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